

CONTEMPORARY COMMENTS

*Writers of the Early Nineteenth Century
as they appeared to each other*

BY

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*The Strange Family, Notes and Memories of a
Sports Reporter, Lectures to Living Authors*

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS AFTER
THE CONTEMPORARY DRAWINGS BY

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INTRODUCTION

I N T R O D U C T I O N

CONTEMPORARY valuations, in art and letters, have more than a merely academic interest. They have the merit, also, of being genuine—as a rule. After the lapse of a few years it is too often the case that your critic merely echoes the received opinion. It has become the fashion to admire, and the writer of gossip sees everything through the spectacles of authority. Or, if he does not reiterate the common cant, he is probably induced by the chorus of praise to attempt something in the way of depreciation. In brief, whichever line he takes, his opinion has been almost inevitably influenced by those of his predecessors.

It is an axiom that, sooner or later, honest worth will find its just level. According to this comforting view it matters little whether your work is hailed almost from the start with enthusiasm, as was Scott's, or with obloquy and ridicule, as was the case with Keats, or with mere neglect, as with Blake. The pendulum swings, backwards and forwards, and the more violent the initial impulse the longer is the period of reaction; but in the end the tumult dies and the great reading public feel that their author can be safely docketed—and put away on the dusty shelf. Of course, though this may be true enough with those who have made sufficient noise in the reviews, who have been enthusiastically praised or chastised with a more than common scurrility, it is a little difficult to persuade ourselves that some of our Miltos do not remain for ever mute and inglorious. Every author recognises that Neglect is the great danger. He would far rather be flayed by the most censorious of critics than left alone.

I have tried to collect in this book some of the more interesting opinions which the writers of the first half of the nineteenth century expressed upon each other. These opinions, it seems to me, are often more valuable as indicating certain limitations in the mind of the critic than for their estimate of the work criticised. One likes to see the judgment of Wordsworth, for example, on Byron, or *vice versa*, for both reasons: the judgment of Carlyle on men like Lamb, Keats and Shelley interests us more because of the light it throws on Carlyle himself than for any it throws on them—but it is true that Carlyle had a gift for mordant description that gilds everything he wrote about

his contemporaries with a sinister glory. We may not approve, but we read and chuckle inwardly. He is best when he has seen the man. And that is another point worthy of consideration. Your contemporary may have seen the author he criticises. He may even have conversed with him, or dwelt with him, as did De Quincey with his friends (who later became his enemies) of the Lake school; and this must surely make anything he has to say of their work more valuable. He can give us the "personal touch," beloved of the modern journalist.

It may be worth while, before introducing severally the great figures of the early nineteenth century, to consider what was the general condition of English Literature before it dawned. The "Augustan age" still maintained some of its influence, and Byron did his best to restore the fading dominion of Pope. But there had been a curious revival recently of the Sonnet form. Warton had started it: William Bowles and Mrs. Charlotte Smith carried on the good work. Indeed, Mrs. Smith became famous; for Coleridge handed down her name to posterity. In the sixteen years before the end of the eighteenth century her poems ran through nine editions; and an illustrated issue, published just before the "Lyrical Ballads", had among the names of subscribers those of Cowper, Charles James Fox, Horace Walpole, and Mrs. Siddons. The sonnets of William Lisle Bowles, slightly better but almost equally melancholy, sold five editions in six years.

Cowper had secured a hearing, not without difficulty. That enterprising publisher, Mr. Johnson, of St. Paul's Churchyard, had made his fortune by "The Task," originally printed in 1785, though his shelves were still loaded with copies of the poet's earlier volume, deemed quite unsaleable. Curious to think that the "Poetical Sketches" of William Blake were printed (one can hardly say published) two years earlier. About the same time William Hayley, friend of Cowper and Blake's well-meaning patron, had seen his "Triumph of Temper" advance towards its twelfth edition (attained in 1803), and Anna Seward, the "Swan of Lichfield," attempted to "unite the impassioned fondness of Pope's 'Eloisa', with the chaster tenderness of Prior's 'Emma'" in a remarkable work called "Louisa: a Poetical Novel." To the Lichfield coterie belonged also that instructor of our youth, Thomas Day, whose ex-

periments in matrimony almost overshadowed his fame as author of "Sandford and Merton;" and Erasmus Darwin, author of the "Botanic Garden" and "The Loves of the Plants," whose name was partially rescued from obscurity by the late Samuel Butler, when he required a stick to lay across his grandson, the expounder of Natural Selection.

The belief in "poetic diction" and elegance died hard. Men like Crabbe, Rogers and Campbell produced at any rate their earlier works in the old style, on the Twickenham lines. The public taste is shown by the fact that nearly thirty thousand copies of Robert Bloomfield's "Farmer's Boy" were sold in the first few years of the new century. Roger's "Pleasures of Memory", elegant and sentimental, incited Campbell to write his "Pleasures of Hope," believed by his contemporaries to be clearly in the Pope tradition.

In prose, during the last decade of the eighteenth century, came the flood tide of German melodrama and Gothic romance, dealing with underground passages and haunted chambers and knights who acted according to the code demanded by the lady-like sympathies of the time. Mrs. Radcliffe wrote "The Mysteries of Udolpho," read with enthusiasm by many young men who were about to change the current of English letters. Shelley, Byron, Leigh Hunt and Keats all speak of this book with a certain respect. There followed "The Monk," by M. G. Lewis, also returned from a German tour. These two books heralded a host of translations from the German, among which the most important were Schiller's "Robbers" and the "Goetz von Berlichingen" of Goethe, rendered into English by Walter Scott. Bürger's ballad of "Lenore" actually appeared in six different translations within a single year. What Carlyle called "Goetzism" became the moving spirit of Scott's literary work. "Goetzism" was, put briefly, the literature of medieval adventure, while "Wertherism", the other component part of the romantic movement, was that of melancholy subjectivity. Byron became the chief exponent of this school, though his heroes had just sufficient British common sense to stop short of the suicide that had become so popular a recreation among the young men of Germany.

In Bristol, about the same time, there chanced to come together a small band of poets (including that rare bird, a

poet-publisher) who were destined to have a very considerable influence on the future of English poetry. Bristol had not, up to the close of the century, had anything of a name in literature, except in so far as it had been the birthplace of Chatterton. But it chanced that in 1794 Coleridge, then a Cambridge undergraduate, who had struck up a friendship with Robert Southey, a young Oxonian, came to Bristol at his invitation, and was there introduced to Robert Lovell, son of a wealthy Quaker, and also to Joseph Cottle, bookseller and minor poet. The romantic scheme of "Pantisocracy," which had brought these young enthusiasts together, never came to anything; but the three Misses Fricker, of Westbury, linked them together. Lovell married the first, Coleridge and Southey, a year later, followed suit. "Poems by Robert Lovell and Robert Southey, of Balliol College, Oxford," had been printed at Bath in 1795. Lovell himself died the following year, but Coleridge discovered Charles Lloyd in Birmingham, and brought him back to join the circle. A greater acquisition was Wordsworth, who had been living at Racedown, in Dorsetshire, and had apparently known Southey, Coleridge, and Cottle for some time. He came to live near Coleridge in 1797; but a year later the group broke up, Southey going to Spain, Wordsworth and Coleridge to Germany, and when they reunited it was in the district of the English Lakes. Charles Lamb was regarded, for critical purposes, as one of the Lake school, for his first verses had appeared bound up with some of Lloyd's. He corresponded freely with them all, but at heart he was a Londoner, and he never thought of making one of the little colony that centred round Southey at Grasmere.

Undoubtedly this little band inaugurated the chief movement in poetry of the rising century. It is remarkable that the three chief figures in it—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey—were all Oxford or Cambridge men, whereas Rogers and Crabbe had no university education: Campbell and Walter Scott were educated in their native land, and Moore in his. The three Englishmen, in their youth, were ardently in sympathy with the French Revolution: as they grew older, like most revolutionaries, they came to suffer and even to approve the settled state of things, and were sufficiently abused by their enemies for turning to support the Government. But the Lake

school of poetry is chiefly remarkable for its advocacy of simple diction as opposed to the artificiality of the Lichfield school. They headed a revolt from the Johnsonian pedantic style.

The Scottish group of writers may be said to have sprung into existence almost contemporaneously with that of the English Lakes. At the close of the eighteenth century Campbell published his "Pleasures of Hope" and Scott his translation of "Goetz von Berlichingen." Scott's early German enthusiasm led him to the kindred literature of his native land, the ballad poetry of the border; and out of the "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" grew the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" and its successors. Then Scott's fame blazed up like a rocket. In the January of 1805 the "Lay" came out: before the end of the year he was the most popular poet in the literary world. It was not a case of a single triumph, like that of Campbell or of Rogers. Scott, like Napoleon on the continent, won victory after victory. "Marmion" and "The Lady of the Lake" consolidated the position won by his first long poem. Even "Rokeby" showed no particular falling off in popularity. But by that time Byron had entered the field. The first cantos of "Childe Harold" came out in 1812, "Rokeby" early in 1813. Scott published afterwards the two poems of "The Lord of the Isles" and "Harold the Dauntless," but chiefly, it seems, because he judged it "a species of cowardice" to desist from a task which he had already begun merely because the new favourite was taking the wind out of his sails.

Scott had another kingdom in view than that of verse. A sensible Scot, he had the judgment to see that his poetical vein was beginning to show signs of exhaustion. He had taught his "trick of fence" to a hundred gentlemen who could now manage, very nearly, to beat him on his own field. He had done his work, on that side; and indeed it was no small thing to have forced the bulk of his contemporaries to read so many volumes of vigorous and wholesome verse. "Waverley," abandoned in 1810, was revived and printed in the summer of 1814; and the anonymous author stood at the gateway of his new and even more profitable realm.

The writers of London fall to be considered next. Samuel Rogers, the banker-poet, wealthy and an art connoisseur, came the first of his group and lasted the longest. Before 1793 he

had taken up his abode in Newington Green and won fame with his "Pleasures of Memory:" afterwards he settled in London and became one of the Holland House set, a giver of literary breakfasts, and a Mæcenas to rising poets.

Thomas Moore came to join him in 1799, and Thomas Campbell in 1803. Byron returned from his Mediterranean tour in 1812, and joined the group. Rogers, it would seem, was the centre round whom they collected, as Coleridge was of the Bristol group and Scott of the northern. It was Rogers who took charge of Byron when he arrived, introducing him to Lord Holland, and to Moore and Campbell. This group of poets, which also included such minor figures as W. R. Spencer and Henry Luttrell, were rather a social coterie than a school. They formulated no doctrines (except that Byron for a time came forward as a champion of Pope), but they represented a social set—at any rate, in their own opinions. Some of them were aristocrats by birth: all of them had moved in what was then considered the best society. Byron himself, apparently, came to think that London and the world were the only places where the conceit was taken out of a man, and for that reason he missed no opportunity of lashing Southey and his companions. They lived away there in their northern solitudes, and how were they to know anything of the world? Scott, it was true, was different: his genial and manly spirit prevailed even over the jealous exclusiveness of Holland House.

It is curious to note how Waterloo seems to have brought a change into the literary world of that epoch. After the fall of Napoleon the demand for verse in England seemed to decline. Sales fell off. Byron departed in 1816—first to Switzerland and then to Italy—and though his copyrights and those of Tom Moore were still valuable properties, the tendency of readers veered towards plain prose. Later poetry came into fashion again, with a marked increase in the number of minor poets. In 1818 we find Southey writing: "They are become marvellously abundant; so that publications which twenty years ago would have attracted considerable attention are now coming from the press in shoals unnoticed." Wordsworth, in 1821, has "As to poetry, I am sick of it: it overruns the country in all the shapes of the plagues of Egypt." And from Moore, four years later, "Hardly a magazine is now published that

does not contain verses which some thirty years ago would have made a reputation." As Scott himself was apt to say, chuckling over his own early successes, "Ecod, we were in the luck of it to come before these fellows."

As early as 1807 Southey had practically turned to prose. He had ceased to be a Lake poet and become a Man of Letters. Historical research, he confessed, was now more to his taste than the writing of lays. He seems to have chosen wisely, for we find him writing in 1829 that the sale of his books at Longman's, where the "old standers" used to bring him in about £200 a year, had fallen almost to nothing. In the same year Jeffrey was writing: "The tuneful quartos of Southey are already little better than lumber: and the rich melodies of Keats and Shelley,—and the fantastical emphasis of Wordsworth,—and the plebeian pathos of Crabbe,—are melting fast from the field of our vision. The novels of Scott have put out his poetry. Even the splendid strains of Moore are fading into distance and dimness, except where they have been married to immortal music; and the blazing star of Byron himself is receding from its pride of place." Campbell and Rogers, thought the *Edinburgh*, were the two who showed the "least marks of decay on their branches." The age was demanding poetry "with embellishments," if poetry at all: the Annuals and Keepsakes offered the only chance; and Rogers himself had to issue a magnificent illustrated edition of his "Italy" to retrieve the fortunes of the first edition, which had fallen almost unnoticed from the press.

What may be styled the post-Napoleonic school of verse had then, clearly, a hard struggle for existence. Leigh Hunt may be called the founder of this group, which *Blackwood's* attacked so furiously as the "Cockney" school. This was a London group, though more, perhaps, suburban than Cockney, for most of them lived in or about Hampstead. But they had not the aristocratic birth or breeding of the Holland House set, nor, for the most part, the scholarship or University training of the Lake school. Leigh Hunt himself had been tolerably well educated, at Christ's Hospital, but he became a journalist and critic almost before leaving school. As a critic he began too early, no doubt, but he had from the first a better judgment than most of his contemporaries. He and Charles Lamb were

the two men of that time whose judgments have been most often upheld by the Appeal Court of posterity. Both of them, too, had great powers of attraction. Few who knew Lamb could help loving him, except Thomas Carlyle—and we may assume that Carlyle would have loved him better if he had known more of him and his history. But even Carlyle himself, whose remarks on his contemporary writers are generally acid enough, had a certain affection for Leigh Hunt.

Of this suburban group Hazlitt and Lamb may be reckoned as Hunt's first recruits. They both visited him in prison, during the years 1813-14, when he was incarcerated, not too severely, for the *Examiner's* attack on the Prince Regent. Charles Cowden Clarke came also, bearing baskets of fruit. It was Clarke who afterwards brought Keats and Hunt together; and it was in Hunt's house that Keats and Shelley first met. John Hamilton Reynolds (Hood's brother-in-law) and Procter (Barry Cornwall) were perhaps the most important of the others who joined this literary party.

It is remarkable that every one of the poetical groups hitherto mentioned had its characteristic metre, or at all events, let us say, some metre which it employed more frequently than the rest. Among the Lake poets blank verse was used in non-dramatic poetry: Scott and his friends used the octosyllabic or ballad metre: the London Society group held by the rhymed heroic verse of Pope: the Suburban school of Hunt used largely a freer decasyllabic, following the method of Dryden or Chaucer. This romantic variation of the heroic couplet permitted the sense to run on and the endings of the line to be less heavily stressed. Feminine endings became more frequent. Their decasyllabics, in short, had a distinct Spenserian flavour about them: indeed, it was Spenser who inspired both Hunt and Keats. The painter Haydon, with his enthusiasm about the Elgin Marbles, brought into the group that love of Greek beauty which gave the Hellenic tinge to so much of their work. Every one of them began forthwith to write of Dryads and Oreads. Hunt himself had his "Hero and Leander" and "Bacchus and Ariadne;" Barry Cornwall his "Rape of Proserpine;" and T. L. Peacock, whose connection with Shelley had brought him within the coterie, wrote that remarkably romantic legend, "Rhododaphne." Shelley himself was filled, for a time, with

Greek enthusiasm, which spread to Byron and even to Wordsworth.

The Leigh Hunt group were more bitterly assailed by the press than any other of that epoch. No doubt the original cause was political. The Hunts, in the *Examiner*, had been champions of the Liberal party: *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* were high Tory. Even more damning than this, perhaps, was a feeling that Keats and Hunt were deficient in scholarship. In those days your critic really believed that a man who had not gone through the public school and University mill, who could not read Latin and Greek authors in the original, had no right to publish a book—certainly not a book of poetry dealing with Greek mythology. The Holland House set, who might have done something to support their brother poets, were inclined to look down upon most of the group socially. Shelley was passable, though clearly mad: he had strange ideas about morals and property, but at any rate he was the son of a baronet. But what was to be made of men like Keats, son of a livery-stable keeper in Moorfields, said to be apprenticed to an apothecary?

It has been said, and I dare say with some truth, that there was also some racial feeling behind the antipathy of *Blackwood's* critics. All these Londoners were from the South of England. Had not Lamb written, in his "Imperfect Sympathies," of the difficulties he encountered in trying to like Scotchmen? Between Edinburgh and London, the two national capitals, there was then a very real feeling of jealousy; and the modern Athens felt, no doubt, that with Scott and *Blackwood's* and the *Edinburgh*, and all the brilliant writers who had gathered round their standards, they had become the real centre of literary life. "Christopher North" and his comrades trounced Hunt and Keats heartily enough, but it was the same writer who penned, in 1834, the healing phrase—"The Animosities are mortal, but the Humanities live for ever."

An offshoot from the Leigh Hunt group was that which had for its centre the *London Magazine*. The career of this periodical was short—a mere nine years from 1820—and towards the end of its life a good many of its more important contributors fell away. But for a few years it possessed as good a list of authors as could well be found at that time. Thomas Hood,

after the death of Scott, the first editor, became more or less responsible for the contents; and among the writers whom he collected were such names as Lamb, De Quincey, Procter, Allan Cunningham, Hazlitt, John Clare, the Northamptonshire poet, and Henry Cary, the translator of Dante. It was in the *London*, and apparently at the editor's suggestion, that the "Confessions of an Opium-Eater" first appeared. De Quincey had then just left the Lakes, and had not yet published anything of merit. Hood was another who found his first start in that fortunate sub-editorial appointment, for up to that time he had been working as an engraver, and only dreaming of poetry in his spare moments. Lamb's best work—or some of it—found a temporary home in the *London's* pages, as did Landor's famous dialogue between Southeby and Porson. Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, and young Hartley Coleridge, were two others whose names are to be found in those files.

Of all the writers of the early part of the nineteenth century, two stand out at once as curiously lonely figures. William Blake, it is not too much to say, was hardly known even by name to most of his famous contemporaries. When he was already nearing the end of his career, Crabb Robinson "discovered" him and wrote proposing to introduce him to Wordsworth. There are short references to him to be found in Lamb, Southeby, and Coleridge's letters. Moore, apparently, had never heard of him—which is perhaps not surprising: what is more astonishing is that he is said to have admired one of his poems when recited to him. Leigh Hunt, generally a good critic of the work of other men, does not even appear to have heard of him as a poet, though his *Examiner* contained some very unkind notices of his work as an artist. Blake died three years after Byron, at the age of seventy: it was the better part of a century before he came again to life.

Another solitary figure in the literary world of that time was that of Jane Austen. It is not a little remarkable that an age that acclaimed Joanna Baillie as the greatest dramatic poet of the day, and could read with patience the tracts of Hannah More, should have passed the author of "Pride and Prejudice" by with hardly so much as a second glance. The "incomparable Jane" had no footing whatever in the literary

circles of her day. "Pride and Prejudice"—her first and probably her best-known work—was begun in the winter of 1796 and finished before the end of 1797, although not issued until sixteen years later. Publishers were even more shy of her books than is usually the case with work of high merit. "Northanger Abbey" was sold in 1803 to a Bath bookseller for £10; but the unhappy man repented of his bargain, and was glad to sell the MS. back to her later. "Sense and Sensibility", though written later than "Pride and Prejudice", came out two years earlier, in 1811: "Mansfield Park" in 1814 and "Emma" in 1816. The others were not brought out until after her death. And they were all issued anonymously.

I have not included Jane Austen's name among the subjects of this book—chiefly because she was so little known at that time that her name is hardly to be found in the literary gossip of the period. Sir Walter Scott, of course, had discovered her as early as 1822, when we find him writing to Joanna Baillie about this Miss Austen, "authoress of some novels which have a great deal of nature in them!" There is also the well-known passage in his diary (March 14, 1826) in which he writes of "Pride and Prejudice," just read for the third time, at least: "That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements, and feelings, and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going; but the exquisite touch, which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me." But these notes were written nearly a decade after her death; and it was not until Macaulay, penning his article on Madame D'Arblay in 1843, took occasion to introduce his panegyric on Jane Austen as one of the writers who approached nearest to Shakespeare in the art of character-drawing, that she may be said to have attained the rank of an English classic.

Both Blake and Jane Austen went calmly on their own way, remote from the realities of the world. No one would imagine, reading the poems of the one or the novels of the other, that they had lived through the French Revolution, witnessed the rise and fall of Napoleon, and seen Byron, Scott and the Lake poets succeed Crabbe, Rogers and Campbell. Blake was in-

tered only in his gigantic dreams, Jane Austen in her little provincial backwater.

Walter Savage Landor makes another isolated figure in the literary gallery of those times. In 1811 he suddenly married a young lady whom he had met in a Bath ballroom, and attempted to settle down in Monmouthshire; but it is doubtful whether a nature like Landor's could have settled down anywhere for long, at any rate, in double harness. He left England after three years of quarrelling with his neighbours and Quixotic attempts to improve the condition of the peasantry and the land they cultivated, and lived for the next twenty years in Como, Pisa and Florence. In 1835 he returned to England, but returned to Italy in 1858 for the last six years of his life. It is singular that although Shelley was actually living in Pisa at the same time the two never seem to have become acquainted. Nor did he meet Byron, the other exile. Indeed, he disliked Byron and displayed no admiration for Shelley until after his tragic death. Southey was the only literary friend with whom he corresponded with any regularity; and the later "Imaginary Conversations" probably owe their existence to the fact that Southey also was composing dialogues. Landor's nature was proud, aloof, aristocratic. There was something of the old Roman about him—and indeed he wrote most of his shorter poems in Latin until he went to live in Italy. He reverted to English when it was no longer the common language of the country in which he lived—and this may be held characteristic of the man.

In October, 1802, Sydney Smith, by his own account, edited the first number of the *Edinburgh Review*, which he had proposed to Jeffrey at his residence in Buccleuch Place, as an organ for opinions "a little too liberal for the dynasty of Dundas," then practically supreme in North Britain. He left Edinburgh and the *Review* behind him shortly afterwards, but Jeffrey and Brougham carried on the work, and Sydney Smith himself continued to write for it for the next twenty-five years—until, in fact, he obtained a prebendary in Bristol cathedral from Lord Lyndhurst, a Tory minister. In February, 1809, came the *Quarterly*, which owed its existence in no small degree to Scott's annoyance with Jeffrey for his review of "Marmion." Gifford was the first editor: Lockhart succeeded to the chair in

1825. On the first of April, 1817, was issued the opening number of the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*, afterwards (with its seventh number) to be known as *Blackwood's*. Politically, the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's* were Tory, the *Edinburgh Whig*, and in those days politics and literature were not kept separate: if a writer was your political enemy you took the opportunity of dealing severely with his works when they chanced to come into your hands.

The rise of the great reviews marked another step forward towards the independence of the Man of Letters. It brought an additional form of publication, an additional source of income. The magazines and reviews may be said to have provided means of subsistence for such men as Carlyle and Macaulay in their early days, before they had attained to fame and a reasonable certainty of sale in book form. Of the names that follow in this book, Hazlitt, Sydney Smith, Carlyle and Macaulay were all contributors to the *Edinburgh*, Southey was a constant writer for some time in the *Quarterly*, De Quincey had a footing in *Blackwood's*, as well as in the *London* and several other minor magazines. Leigh Hunt, of course, and Thomas Hood reaped most of their income from magazines. Periodical literature, in short, had assumed a new importance. In Dr. Johnson's day authors were exchanging the patron for the publisher: now the editor was also coming into the field as a competitor for his wares. And this period of efflorescence, when the world of letters was beginning to visualise the possibility of living (to a certain degree) by reviewing the works of its contemporaries, seems to me eminently suitable for the purpose of this book. I have tried to collect here most of the interesting comments that the great men of the early Nineteenth Century made upon one another.

WALTER SCOTT

1771-1832



Yours truly Walter Scott

THE AUTHOR OF "WAVERLEY".

WALTER SCOTT

1771-1832

THE German romantic tide swept Walter Scott into his first phase of authorship. It was probably William Taylor, of Norwich, that early enthusiast for German poetry, who fired him first by a translation of Burger's "Lenore" in 1795. In 1799 Scott brought out his own translation of Goethe's "Goetz von Berlichingen"; and it seems to have occurred to him that he might do for his Scottish border something of what Goethe had done for the ancient feudalism of the Rhine. With the assistance of John Leyden and William Laidlaw he began to collect the material afterwards used for his "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border." From this arose the suggestion of Lady Dalkeith that he should write a ballad on the subject of the legend of Gilpin Horner; and this grew by degrees into the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," the poem which started Scott's immense popularity. The influence of Coleridge's "Christabel," some fragments of which had been repeated to him by a friend who had met Coleridge during his expedition to Malta, no doubt was largely responsible for the choice of metre; and to the novelty of the four-beat line, with the variations that he introduced, much of Scott's popularity as a poet was due.

The public appetite for romantic poetry waned, and Scott was acute enough to perceive the slackening of the demand in good time. It was the turn of prose, and the day of the romantic novel was dawning. As early as 1805 "Waverley" had been begun, but laid aside until 1813, when the first threatenings of financial embarrassment began to appear. Scott, lighting upon the manuscript of the opening chapters, read them through once more and resolved to complete the story, which he did in about four weeks, for he worked with astounding rapidity. The book was published anonymously the following year, and the secret of the authorship was not formally divulged until thirteen years later. The success of the romances that followed "Waverley" gave Scott a second and greater reputation.

It was near the end of 1825 that he suddenly discovered the insecurity of his position financially. Recently Scott's

connections with the two houses of Constable and Ballantyne have been instanced as examples of avarice on the part of a popular novelist anxious for personal aggrandisement and insanely desirous of founding a noble family. However that may be, the manner in which Scott met the disaster has reflected glory on the profession of letters. Faced with a personal responsibility for the huge sum of £130,000, he refused to take refuge in legal quibbles, but for the rest of his life toiled to clear off the debt. But for ill health he might even have succeeded, for the first two years produced no less than £40,000 for the benefit of his creditors.

Literature, said Scott, should be a staff rather than a crutch. There is irony in the fact that, even with a staff that produced an income of twenty thousand a year, he should have found himself overwhelmed by debt. Perhaps fortunately, towards the end his mental powers failed, and he became persuaded that at last all his debts were paid and he was once more a free man.

Scott's great merit was his virility—a quality which the neurotic element in nineteenth century criticism was apt to despise. A poet for boys—was the verdict after his star began to decline. But Scott himself had no illusions about his poetry. He had judgment enough to see that his poetical vein was narrow, and it did not take him long to perceive that it was becoming exhausted. Also, a swarm of imitators had arisen, and Scott did not like being one of a crowd. As he wrote, in 1830, "like Bobadil, he had taught his trick of fence to a hundred gentlemen (and ladies), who could fence very nearly or quite as well as himself." He did not wait to be destroyed by his own imitators, like another Actæon by his dogs, but sought a second line more difficult to follow, in which his power of telling a story, his love for Gothic mediævalism and Scottish antiquities, could still find ample scope. He left his poetical kingdom to Byron, and founded another and a greater realm in the world of prose.

BYRON ON SCOTT

To Mr. Hodgson, in a letter dated Oct. 1810.

I SEE the 'Lady of the Lake' advertised. Of course, it is in his old ballad style, and pretty. After all, Scott is the best of them.

The end of all scribblement is to amuse, and he certainly succeeds there. I long to read his new romance.

Some ten years later, in a letter to Murray

my love to Scott. I shall think higher of Knighthood ever after for his being dubbed. By the way, he is the first poet titled for his talent in Britain: it has happened abroad before now; but on the Continent titles are universal and worthless. Why don't you send me 'Ivanhoe' and the 'Monastery?' I have never written to Sir Walter, for I know he has a thousand things, and I a thousand nothings, to do; but I hope to see him at Abbotsford before very long, and I will sweat his claret for him, though Italian abstemiousness has made my brain but a shillipit concern for a Scotch sitting 'inter pocula.' I love Scott and Moore, and all the better brethren; but I hate and abhor that puddle of water-worms whom you have taken into your troop.

BYRON. *Letters.*

In a letter to M. Beyle. Date May 29, 1823.

THERE is one part of your observations in the pamphlet which I shall venture to remark upon;—it regards Walter Scott. You say that "his character is little worthy of enthusiasm," at the same time that you mention his productions in the manner they deserve. I have known Walter Scott long and well, and in occasional situations which call forth the *real* character—and I can assure you that his character *is* worthy of admiration—that of all men he is the most *open*, the most *honourable*, the most *amiable*. With his politics I have nothing to do: they differ from mine, which renders it difficult for me to speak of them. But he is *perfectly sincere* in them; and Sincerity may be humble, but she cannot be servile. I pray you, therefore, to correct or soften that passage. You may, perhaps, attribute this officiousness of mine to a false affectation of *candour*, as I happen to be a writer also. Attribute it to what motive you please, but *believe* the *truth*. I say that Walter Scott is as nearly a thorough good man as man can be, because I *know* it by experience to be the case.

MEDWIN, *Conversations of Byron (Appendix).*

LEIGH HUNT ON SCOTT

In his "Feast of the Poets" Leigh Hunt had introduced Walter Scott, in what he admits was a "somewhat irreverent fashion." In his Autobiography he maintains, that with reference to high standards of poetry, his estimate of Scott's then publications will "still be found not far from the truth, by those who have profited by a more advanced age of æsthetical culture." He adds this passage:

THERE is as much difference, for instance, poetically speaking, between Coleridge's brief poem, *Christabel*, and all the narrative poems of Walter Scott, or, as Wordsworth called them, "novels in verse," as between a precious essence and a coarse imitation of it, got up for sale. Indeed, Coleridge, not unnaturally, though not with entire reason (for the story and characters in Scott were the real charm), lamented that an endeavour, unavowed, had been made to catch his tone, and had succeeded just far enough to recommend to unbounded popularity what had nothing in common with it.

LEIGH HUNT. *Autobiography*.

HAZLITT ON SCOTT

Scott as poet.

IT is long since we read, and long since we thought of, our author's poetry. It would probably have gone out of date with the immediate occasion, even if he himself had not contrived to banish it from our recollection. It is not to be denied that it had great merit, both of an obvious and intrinsic kind. It abounded in vivid descriptions, in spirited action, in smooth and flowing versification. But it wanted *character*. . . . It slid out of the mind as soon as read, like a river; and would have been forgotten, but that the public curiosity was fed with ever-new supplies from the same teeming liquid source.

Metrical Romances.

THE Epics are not poems, so much as metrical romances. There is a glittering veil of verse thrown over the features of nature and of old romance. . . . Truth of feeling and of circumstance is translated into a tinkling sound, a tinsel *commonplace*. . . . Sir Walter's Muse is a *Modern Antique*. The smooth, glossy

texture of his verse contrasts happily with the quaint, uncouth, rugged materials of which it is composed, and takes away any appearance of heaviness or harshness from the body of local traditions and obsolete costume. We see grim knights and iron armour; but then they are woven in silk with a careless, delicate hand, and have the softness of flowers.

Scott as novelist.

HE is only the amanuensis of truth and history. It is impossible to say how fine his writings in consequence are, unless we could describe how fine nature is. All that portion of the history of his country that he has touched upon, (wide as the scope is)—the manners, the personages, the events, the scenery—lives over again in his volumes. Nothing is wanting—the illusion is complete. There is a hurtling in the air, a trampling of feet upon the ground, as these perfect representations of human character or fanciful belief come thronging back upon our imaginations.

Tears off the trappings of Sentimentality.

HIS poetry was a lady's waiting-maid, dressed out in cast-off finery: his prose is a beautiful, rustic nymph, that, like Dorothea in "Don Quixote," when she is surprised with dishevelled tresses bathing her naked feet in the brook, looks round her, abashed at the admiration her charms have excited! The grand secret of the author's success in these latter publications is, that he has completely got rid of the trammels of authorship, and torn off at one rent (as Jack got rid of so many yards of lace in the "Tale of a Tub") all the ornaments of fine writing and worn-out sentimentality.

A New Edition of Human Nature.

... WHAT a power is that of genius! What a world of thought and feeling is thus rescued from oblivion! How many hours of heartfelt satisfaction has our author given to the gay and thoughtless! How many sad hearts has he soothed in pain and solitude! It is no wonder that the public repay with lengthened applause and gratitude the pleasure they receive. He writes as fast as they can read, and he does not write himself down. He is always in the public eye, and we do not tire of him. His worst is better than any other person's best. His *backgrounds* (and his

later works are little else but backgrounds capitally made out) are more attractive than the principal figures and most complicated actions of other writers. His works (taken together) are almost like a new edition of human nature. This is indeed to be an author!

W. HAZLITT. *The Spirit of the Age.*

JEFFREY¹ ON SCOTT

The Edinburgh Review Criticises "Marmion."

WE are inclined to suspect that the success of the work now before us will be less brilliant than that of the author's former publication, though we are ourselves of opinion that its intrinsic merits are nearly, if not altogether equal; and that, if it had had the fate to be the elder born, it would have inherited as fair a portion of success as has fallen to the lot of its predecessor. It is a good deal longer, indeed, and somewhat more ambitious; and it is rather clearer, that it has greater faults than that it has greater beauties—though, for our own parts, we are inclined to believe in both propositions. It has more flat and tedious passages, and more ostentation of historical and antiquarian lore; but it has also greater richness and variety, both of character and incident; and if it has less sweetness and pathos in the softer passages, it has certainly more vehemence and force of colouring in the loftier and busier representations of action and emotion. The place of the prologuing minstrel is but ill supplied, indeed, by the epistolary dissertations which are prefixed to each book of the present poem; and the ballad-pieces and mere episodes which it contains have less finish and poetical beauty; but there is more airiness and spirit in the higher delineations; and the story, if not more skilfully conducted, is at least better complicated, and extended through a wider field of adventure. . . .

¹ Francis Jeffrey, afterwards Lord Jeffrey, born in 1773, was admitted to the Bar in 1794, and in 1802 inaugurated the *Edinburgh Review* in association with Sydney Smith (q.v.). He wielded an almost unparalleled literary influence, undisturbed by a few "incidents", of which the best-known is probably the farcical duel with Tom Moore, down to 1829 when he retired. He entered Parliament in 1832 for Edinburgh, but was not very successful in his new sphere, and was finally glad to accept a judgeship in the Court of Sessions in 1834, from which time his judicial and special duties absorbed him till his death in 1850.

But though we think this last romance of Mr. Scott's about as good as the former, and allow that it affords great indications of poetical talent, we must remind our readers that we never entertained much partiality for this sort of composition, and ventured on a former occasion to express our regret that an author endowed with such talents should consume them in imitations of obsolete extravagance, and in the representation of manners and sentiments in which none of his readers can be supposed to take much interest, except the few who can judge of their exactness. To write a modern romance of chivalry, seems to be much such a phantasy as to build a modern abbey or an English pagoda. For once, however, it may be excused as a pretty caprice of genius; but a second production of the same sort is entitled to less indulgence, and imposes a sort of duty to drive the author from so idle a task, by a fair exposition of the faults which are, in a manner, inseparable from its execution. His genius, seconded by the omnipotence of fashion, has brought chivalry again into temporary favour. Fine ladies and gentlemen now talk indeed of donjons, keeps, tabards, scutcheons, tressures, caps of maintenance, portcullises, wimples, and we know not what besides; just as they did, in the days of Dr. Darwin's popularity, of gnomes, sylphs, oxygen, gossamer, polygynia, and polyandria. That fashion, however, passed rapidly away, and Mr. Scott should take care that a different sort of pedantry does not produce the same effects. . . .

Edinburgh Review, April, 1808.

As appears from the following letter, the above review had been penned by Jeffrey himself, who had been engaged for some time to dine that same day with the author at his house in Castle Street. Scott received his guest with all his accustomed cordiality, but "the mistress of the house, though perfectly polite, was not quite so easy with him as usual. She, too, behaved with exemplary civility during the dinner; but could not help saying, in her broken English, "when her guest was departing, 'Well, good-night, Mr. Jeffrey—dey tell me you have abused Scott in de Review, and I hope Mr. Constable has paid you very well for writing it.'"

Jeffrey to Scott, with copy of the Edinburgh Review containing his review of "Marmion."

QUEEN STREET,

Tuesday.

DEAR SCOTT,

If I did not give you credit for more magnanimity than other of your irritable tribe, I should scarcely venture to put this into your hands. As it is, I do it with no little solicitude, and earnestly hope that it will make no difference in the friendship which has hitherto subsisted between us. I have spoken of your poem exactly as I think, and though I cannot reasonably suppose that you will be pleased with everything I have said, it would mortify me very severely to believe I had given you pain. If you have any amity left for me, you will not delay very long to tell me so. . . .

LOCKHART. *Life of Scott.*

COLERIDGE ON SCOTT

Coleridge Discourses on Scott.

WHEN I am very ill indeed, I can read Scott's novels, and they are almost the only books I can then read. I cannot at such times read the Bible; my mind reflects upon it, but I cannot bear the open page.

Dear Sir Walter Scott and myself were exact, but harmonious opposites in this;—that every old ruin, hill, river or tree called up in his mind a host of historical or biographical associations,—just as a bright pan of brass, when beaten, is said to attract the swarming bees;—whereas for myself, notwithstanding Dr. Johnson, I believe I should walk over the plain of Marathon without taking more interest in it than in any other plain of similar features. Yet I receive as much pleasure in reading the account of the battle, in Herodotus, as anyone can.

I think Old Mortality and Guy Mannering the best of the Scotch novels.

Table Talk.

WORDSWORTH ON SCOTT

First Meeting of Scott and Wordsworth.

“WE were received,” Mr. Wordsworth has told me, “with that frank cordiality which, under whatever circumstances I after-

wards met him, always marked his manners; and, indeed, I found him then in every respect—except, perhaps, that his animal spirits were somewhat higher—precisely the same man that you knew him in later life; the same lively, entertaining conversation, full of anecdote, and averse from disquisition; the same unaffected modesty about himself; the same cheerful and benevolent and hopeful views of man and the world. He partly read and partly recited, sometimes in an enthusiastic style of chant, the first four cantos of the Lay of the Last Minstrel; and the novelty of the manners, the clear picturesque descriptions, and the easy, glowing energy of much of the verse, greatly delighted me."

Scott's Confidence in his literary resources.

THE impression on Mr. Wordsworth's mind was that on the whole he attached much less importance to his literary labours or reputation than to his bodily sports, exercises, and social amusements; and yet he spoke of his profession as if he had already given up almost all hope of rising by it; and some allusion being made to its profits, observed that "he was sure he could, if he chose, get more money than he should ever wish to have from the booksellers."

This confidence in his own literary resources appeared to Mr. Wordsworth remarkable.

LOCKHART. *Life of Scott.*

Wordsworth discusses Scott's poetry.

HE discoursed at great length on Scott's works. His poetry he considered of that kind which will always be in demand, and that the supply will always meet it, suitable to the age. He does not consider that it in any way goes below the surface of things; it does not reach to any intellectual or spiritual emotion; it is altogether superficial, and he felt it himself to be so. His descriptions are not true to Nature; they are addressed to the ear, not to the mind. He was a master of bodily movements in his battle-scenes; but very little productive power was exerted in popular creations.

WORDSWORTH'S *Prose Works* (Conversations and Personal Reminiscences).

MOORE ON SCOTT

Moore was not a great admirer of the poetry of Walter Scott. He writes to Miss Godfrey, dated March, 1815:

I WAS a good deal surprised at you, who are so very hard to please, speaking so leniently of Scott's Lord of the Isles: it is wretched stuff, the bellman all over. I'll tell you what happened to me about it, to give you an idea of what it is to correspond *confidentially* with a firm. In writing to *Longman* the other day, I said, "Between you and me, I don't much like Scott's poem," and I had an answer back, "We are very sorry you do not like Mr. Scott's book. Longman, Hurst, Orme, Rees, Brown," &c. What do you think of this for a "between you and me?"

THOMAS MOORE. *Memoirs, Journal, etc.*

From another letter to the same, dated Dec. 6, 1815.

. . . I HAVE read *Walter-loo*, since I heard from you. The battle murdered many, and he has murdered the battle:¹ 'tis sad stuff; Hougmont rhyming to "long," "strong," etc. He must have learned his pronunciation of French from Solomon Grundy in the play—"Commong dong, as they say in Dunkirk."

THOMAS MOORE. *Ibid.*

JOANNA BAILLIE ON SCOTT

Joanna Baillie on her first meeting with Scott.

"I WAS at first," she answered, "a little disappointed, for I was fresh from the Lay, and had pictured to myself an ideal elegance and refinement of feature; but I said to myself, If I had been in a crowd, and at a loss what to do, I should have fixed upon that face among a thousand, as the sure index of the benevolence and shrewdness that would and could help me in my strait. We had not talked long, however, before I saw in the expressive play of his countenance far more even of elegance and refinement than I had missed in its mere lines."

LOCKHART. *Life of Scott.*

¹ The poem referred to was, of course, Walter Scott's "Waterloo," of which Lord Erskine wrote,

Of all who fell, by sabre or by shot,
Not one fell half so flat as Walter Scott.

SOUTHEY ON SCOTT

Southey admired Scott as a man, but the references to Scott's poetry scattered through his letters are written in rather a carping spirit, whereas Sir Walter invariably spoke highly of Southey's work, and was instrumental in obtaining for him the succession to Laureate Pye.

From a Letter to C. Williams Wynn, dated July, 1808.

THERE is a buzz of envy beginning against Walter Scott, and the world are looking for blemishes in "Marmion" as eagerly as they hunted for beauties in the "Lay." The whole edition of 2000 was subscribed for among the booksellers, and they would have taken more could they have had them; yet, unless I am much mistaken, Scott has killed the goose which laid the golden eggs. The story is enough for a ballad, and not for more, and the poet is made subservient to the antiquarian, not the antiquarian to the poet. It has beautiful parts, yet, before it appeared, I thought within myself how glad I should be to write such a poem at half price; now that I have seen it, no such wish remains.

From a letter to his brother, Capt. Southey, R.N., dated Jan. 5, 1815.

I RECEIVED Scott's poem¹ last night. In point of story it is, I think, worse constructed than any of his former and not equal to them either in conception of character, or in what may be called scenic effect; but it has his characteristic life and vigour. The last book is very unfortunate in all respects; it is so disconnected with all the former, that the poem might almost as well have done without it, for what is necessary to the sequel of the story might easily have been added to the fifth, and it reminds you of the last book of "Marmion," greatly to its own disadvantage. On the other hand, Scott no longer provokes you in the midst of his story with a string of ballads and songs: what little there is of this is properly and necessarily introduced. I cannot guess at its reception; for there is no calculating upon such a weathercock as popular favour. "Rokeby," certainly, was not popular; yet, in point of dramatic conception of character it was the best of his poems. . . .

WARTER. *Letters of Robert Southey.*

¹ Apparently "The Lord of the Isles."

Southey has forebodings as to Scott's "Life of Napoleon." From a letter to Mrs. Hughes, dated Sept. 21, 1827.

I HAVE not even seen the "Life of Napoleon." There are many reasons why it could not but disappoint the expectations which had been formed of it. It was not possible that Sir Walter could keep up as a historian the character which he had obtained as a novelist; and in the first announcement of this "Life" he had, not very wisely, promised something as stimulating as his novels. Alas! he forgot that there could be no stimulus of curiosity in it; for all persons above the age of five and twenty have read the History of Bonaparte in the newspapers. The book is far too long for fashionable reading, and just as much too short for its subject. He intended, I am told, to write upon the same scale as that which I have taken in the "Life of Nelson;" but upon that scale a Life of Bonaparte would require at least nine of my quartos, instead of such a volume as his; for it is the history of Europe during twenty years. Add to this that his enemies have been eager to run down a lame work, and that it was introduced with a sort of trick and puffery which made his friends sorry; and there will be no difficulty in accounting for the cold reception which it has found. If the book-sellers are the losers, it will be no matter. The next tale will not be expected with less eagerness, nor read with less pleasure; and his permanent reputation will be as little affected by this "Life," as Fielding's is by his comedies.

WARTER. *Letters of Robert Southey.*

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD ON SCOTT

Miss Mitford reads "Ivanhoe" and "The Monastery." Dated April, 1820.

I WAS sure you would like "Ivanhoe;" Robin Hood's ballads were my childhood's delight too; not in a pamphlet, but in Bishop Percy's "Reliques of Ancient Poetry," out of which, and Allan Ramsay's "Gentle Shepherd," I may almost be said to have learnt to read. Rebecca is divine. How do you like "The Monastery?" To me it appears a falling off. That White Spirit, though she talks nothing but verse, is a very unpoetical personage, and harmonizes as ill with the admirable tone of

common life preserved in the rest of the book, as Walter Scott's witches and soothsayers commonly do. Shakespeare—to whom the "Edinburgh Review" has, with a truly Scottish impudence, compared the great novelist—managed these matters differently; nothing can exceed the fine keeping of his supernatural dramas; the accessories in "Macbeth," "Hamlet," and "The Tempest," are of the very colour of the spiritual agents. Besides this great fault, the story is hurried; and the Elizabethan dandy, though admirably done, almost as tiresome as the real man would be himself. I am told, though it seems scarcely credible, that Longman and Co. have given ten thousand pounds for the copyright, and that there are two more novels ready for the press, as soon as this has attained a second edition. This is really a discovery of the philosopher's stone: we shall soon see Sir Walter a lord, if he goes on at this rate.

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD. *Letters and Life.*

SYDNEY SMITH ON SCOTT

After Sydney Smith left the editorship of the Edinburgh Review Constable still kept up the custom of sending him presentation copies of new books. His acknowledgments of some of Walter Scott's are appended:
Of "The Bride of Lammermoor." Date, June 28, 1819.

I AM truly obliged by your kindness in sending me the last novel of Walter Scott. It would be profanation to call him Mr. Walter Scott. I should as soon say Mr. Shakespeare or Mr. Fielding. Sir William and Lady Ashton are excellent, and highly dramatic. Drumthwacket is very well done; parts of Caleb are excellent. Some of the dialogues between Bucklaw and Craingent are as good as can be, and both these characters very well imagined. *As the author has left off writing*, I shall not again be disturbed so much in my ordinary occupations. When I get hold of one of these novels, turnips, sermons, and justice-business are all forgotten.

Of "Ivanhoe."

... THERE is no doubt of its success. There is nothing very powerful and striking in it; but it is uniformly agreeable, lively and interesting, and the least dull and most easily read of any novel I remember. Pray make the author go on; I am sure he

has five or six more such novels in him, therefore five or six holidays for the whole kingdom.

Of "The Monastery."

... I MUST frankly confess I admire (it) less than any of the others—much less. Such I think you will find the judgment of the public to be. The idea of painting ancient manners in a fictitious story is admirable, and the writer had admirable talents for it; but nothing is done without pains, and I doubt whether pains have been taken in the Monastery,—if they have, they have failed. It is quite childish to introduce supernatural agency; as much of the terrors and follies of superstition as you please, but no actual ghosts and hobgoblins. I recommend one novel every year, and more pains. So much money is worth getting; so much deserved fame is worth keeping. So much amusement we ought all to strive to continue for the public good. . . .

Of "The Fortunes of Nigel." Dated June 21, 1822.

... A FAR better novel than The Pirate, though not of the highest order of Scott's novels. It is the first novel in which there is no Meg Merrilies. There is, however, a Dominie Sampson in the horologer. The first volume is admirable. Nothing can be better than the apprentices, the shop of old Heriot, the state of the city. James is quite excellent whenever he appears. I do not dislike Alsatia. The miser's daughter is very good, so is the murder. The story execrable; the gentleman-like, light, witty conversation always (as in all his novels) very bad. Horrors or humour are his forte. . . .

SYDNEY SMITH TO A. CONSTABLE. *Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondents.*

To Lord Holland. July, 1828.

I AM reading Walter Scott's Napoleon, which I do with the greatest pleasure. I am as much surprised at it, as at any of his works. So current, so sensible, animated, well-arranged: so agreeable to take up, so difficult to put down, and, for him, so candid! There are of course many mistakes, but that has nothing to do with the general complexion of the work.

HOLLAND. *Letters of Sydney Smith.*

SCOTT TO MOORE

Scott talks to Tom Moore about his own writings.

. . . SAID that the person who first set him upon trying his talent at poetry was Mat. Lewis. He had passed the early part of his life with a set of clever, rattling, drinking fellows, whose thoughts and talents lay wholly out of the region of poetry; he, therefore, had never been led to find out his turn for it, though always fond of the old ballads. In the course of the conversation he, at last (to my no small surprise and pleasure), mentioned the novels without the least reserve as his own; "I then hit upon these novels (he said), which have been a mine of wealth to me." Had begun Waverley long before, and then thrown it by, till, having occasion for some money (to help his brother, I think), he bethought himself of it, but could not find the MS.; nor was it till he came to Abbotsford that he at last stumbled upon it. By this he made 3000*l.* The conjectures and mystification at first amused him very much: wonders himself that the secret was so well kept, as about twenty persons knew it from the first.

THOMAS MOORE. *Memoirs, etc.*

WILLIAM GODWIN¹ ON SCOTT

On "Guy Mannering."

ONE of the first things I did after my arrival was to read Guy Mannering, which I regard as, on the whole, inferior to Waverley; but I have since read the Antiquary, which I judge to be superior to both. It is full of character, humour, observation, and learning, and fixes the attention of the reader, and inspires him with delight, from one end to the other. The author has disdained to call in even the aid of a story to keep up the enchantment. In this respect the Antiquary has a striking resemblance to my old friend Humphrey Clinker. In his other novels the author is perpetually labouring after a tale, and we feel that he does not always reach the thing he strives to attain. . . .

W. GODWIN to A. CONSTABLE, dated May 21, 1816. *Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondents.*

¹ The well-known author of "Political Justice" and "Caleb Williams."

WASHINGTON IRVING ON SCOTT

From a letter to James K. Paulding, dated May 27, 1820.

HE is a man that, if you knew, you would love; a right, honest-hearted, generous-spirited being; without vanity, affectation, or assumption of any kind. He enters into every passing scene or passing pleasure with the interest and simple enjoyment of a child; nothing seems too high or remote for the grasp of his mind, and nothing too trivial or low for the kindness or pleasantry of his spirit. When I was in want of literary counsel and assistance, Scott was the only literary man to whom I felt that I could talk about myself and my petty concerns with the confidence and freedom that I would to an old friend—nor was I deceived—from the first moment that I mentioned my work to him in a letter, he took a decided and effective interest in it, and has been to me an invaluable friend. It is only astonishing how he finds time, with such ample exercise of the pen, to attend so much to the interest and concerns of others; but no one ever applied to Scott for any aid, counsel, or service that would cost time and trouble, that was not most cheerfully and thoroughly assisted. Life passes away with him in a round of good offices and social enjoyments. Literature seems his sport rather than his labour or his ambition, and I never met with an author so completely void of all the petulance, egotism, and peculiarities of the craft; but I am running into prolixity about Scott, who I confess has completely won my heart, even more as a man than as an author.

WASHINGTON IRVING. *Life and Letters.*

B. W. PROCTER ("BARRY CORNWALL") ON SCOTT

Sir Walter Scott at breakfast with Mr. Rogers, and "Barry Cornwall."

I FIRST met Sir Walter Scott at Mr. Rogers', at breakfast. He was tall, stalwart, bluff but courteous, and rather lame. I was at once struck with his bonhomie and easy simplicity of manner. He talked well and good naturally, and was perfectly self-possessed and very pleasant. Without the slightest appearance of pretension, he spoke like a man well assured of his position. Statesmen, poets, and philosophers of all kinds had

sought his company, and he was admired by everyone, high and low. I do not think that anyone envied him more than one envies kings. He was placed high beyond competition.

His ease and great general power impressed me very strongly lately, when re-reading his Romances. In his unaffectedness and the apparent unconsciousness of strength he is unequalled. There are no more spasmodic efforts in him than in Fielding. I see in no other author such a combination of truth and ease and dramatic power. What a fine easy natural out-of-door air his scenes possess. What great geniality he has. What picturesqueness, from the castle to the cottage, from the religious zealot, and the soldier of fortune, to the very hounds sniffing in the odour of dinner in "Redgauntlet." If he seldom or never penetrates into the innermost regions of men, how fresh are all his outside sketches. He is always the best with mere human beings. If he has a dwarf or a superhuman character, he fails. But look at the multitude of men and women whom he brings before you. . . .

Things come and go: people speak and act and pass away to other regions without any apparent effort. He does nothing visibly to retard them, or hurry them on to another scene. The events, by day or by night, flow on as they do on the common stream of time. Scott seems to have had no vanity. He never thrusts himself into the narrative; never forces in any other person or event, unduly. His tales are not wrought up to a great climax; nor framed for a particular moral or purpose. He does not allow the early scenes to pass dully, and nerve himself up at last for one enormous effort. His books are an evidence of an able, well-balanced mind: there is nothing in excess.

Scott's self-possession.

I MET him (Scott) afterwards at breakfast, in Haydon's studio, when a circumstance occurred that threw a different light on his power of self-command. Charles Lamb and Hazlitt and various other people were there, and the conversation turned on the *vraisemblance* of certain dramatis personæ in a modern book. Sir Walter's opinion was asked. "Well!" replied he, "they are as true as the personages in 'Waverley' and 'Guy Mannering' are, I think." This was long before he had

confessed that he was the author of the Scotch Novels, and when much curiosity was alive on the subject. I looked very steadily into his face as he spoke, but it did not betray any consciousness or suppressed humour. His command of countenance was perfect.

B. W. PROCTER. *Recollections of Men of Letters.*

GEORGE GORDON LORD BYRON

1788-1824

GEORGE GORDON LORD BYRON

1788-1824

“HOURS OF IDLENESS” was published in June, 1807, “by George Gordon Lord Byron, a Minor,” and was, on the whole, not badly received by the press. It was the *Edinburgh Review*, of January, 1808, that, by attacking his early volume, caused him to turn his satire on the British Bards into “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,” published March, 1809. Brougham was the author of the Edinburgh article, though Byron for a long while attributed it to Jeffrey, and appears to have thought that Scott (who actually protested against the critique as being too severe) had something to do with the attack. When at last he learned that Brougham was responsible, he intimated to Rogers that, if ever he returned to England, Brougham should hear from him; and he added that the review in question had cost him three bottles of claret—presumably to raise his spirits after reading it. It was felt by some, including Wordsworth, that such an attack was abominable—“that a young nobleman, who took to poetry, deserved to be encouraged, not ridiculed.” The writing, and even the publishing, of volumes of verse, was apparently considered a pleasing and harmless occupation for gentlemen of title, perhaps less manly than field sports, but equally efficacious as a means for keeping them out of mischief.

It is difficult now to realise the position that Byron held during his lifetime, and later. There is a story in the little sketches scattered through “The Note-books of Samuel Butler” which has always appealed to me. A fellow art student at Heatherley’s told Butler how an old governess, twenty years or so earlier, had been teaching some girls modern geography. One of them did not know the name Missolonghi. The old lady wrung her hands:

“Why, me dear,” she exclaimed, “when I was your age I could never hear the name mentioned without bursting into tears.”

I should perhaps add (Butler appends slyly) that Byron died there.

Probably we are more interested in Byron now than they

were in the 'seventies. The reputations of all writers are subject to the swing of the pendulum, and the more violent the enthusiasm the more severe the subsequent neglect. Matthew Arnold prophesied in 1881 that by the beginning of the twentieth century, when we turned to consider the great names of the nineteenth, Byron and Wordsworth would stand out above all the rest. His prophecy was scarcely borne out by the facts. But it is with the opinions of Byron's contemporaries that I am concerned here. One has only to read the letter written by Carlyle on learning of his death to realise something of the feeling this romantic figure could excite even in the breast of a dour Scottish Presbyterian.

BROUGHAM ON BYRON

On "Hours of Idleness."

Hours of Idleness: A Series of Poems, Original and Translated.
By George Gordon, Lord Byron, a Minor. 8vo, pp. 200.
Newark, 1807.

THE poesy of this young lord belongs to the class which neither gods nor men are said to permit. Indeed, we do not recollect to have seen a quantity of verse with so few deviations in either direction from that exact standard. His effusions are spread over a dead flat, and can no more get above or below the level, than if they were so much stagnant water. As an extenuation of this offence, the noble author is peculiarly forward in pleading minority. We have it in the title-page, and on the very back of the volume; it follows his name like a favourite part of his *style*. Much stress is laid upon it in the preface, and the poems are connected with this general statement of his case, by particular dates, substantiating the age at which each was written. Now, the law upon the point of minority, we hold to be perfectly clear. It is a plea available only to the defendant; no plaintiff can offer it as a supplementary ground of action. . . . Perhaps, however, in reality, all that he tells us about his youth, is rather with a view to increase our wonder, than to soften our censures. He possibly means to say, 'See how a minor can write! This poem was actually composed by a young man of eighteen, and this by one of only sixteen!'—But, alas, we all remember the poetry of Cowley at ten, and Pope at

twelve; and so far from hearing, with any degree of surprise, that very poor verses were written by a youth from his leaving school to his leaving college, inclusive, we really believe this to be the most common of all occurrences; that it happens in the life of nine men in ten who are educated in England; and that the tenth man writes better verse than Lord Byron.

His other plea of privilege, our author rather brings forward in order to wave it. He certainly, however, does allude frequently to his family and ancestors—sometimes in poetry, sometimes in notes; and while giving up his claim on the score of rank, he takes care to remember us of Dr. Johnson's saying, that when a nobleman appears as an author, his merit should be handsomely acknowledged. In truth, it is this consideration only, that induces us to give Lord Byron's poems a place in our review, beside our desire to counsel him, that he do forthwith abandon poetry, and turn his talents, which are considerable, and his opportunities, which are great, to better account.

The essentials of a poem.

WITH this view, we must beg leave seriously to assure him, that the mere rhyming of the final syllable, even when accompanied by the presence of a certain number of feet,—nay, although (which does not always happen) those feet should scan regularly, and have all been counted accurately upon the fingers,—is not the whole art of poetry. We would entreat him to believe, that a certain portion of liveliness, somewhat of fancy, is necessary to constitute a poem; and that a poem in the present day, to be read, must contain at least one thought, either in a little degree different from the ideas of former writers, or differently expressed. We put it to his candour, whether there is any thing so deserving the name of poetry in verses like the following, written in 1806, and whether, if a youth of eighteen could say any thing so uninteresting to his ancestors, a youth of nineteen should publish it.

‘Shades of heroes, farewell! your descendant, departing
From the seat of his ancestors, bids you, adieu!
Abroad, or at home, your remembrance imparting
New courage, he’ll think upon glory, and you.

Though a tear dim his eye, at this sad separation,
 'Tis nature, not fear, that excites his regret:
 Far distant he goes, with the same emulation;
 The fame of his fathers he ne'er can forget.

That fame, and that memory, still will he cherish,
 He vows, that he ne'er will disgrace your renown;
 Like you will he live, or like you will he perish;
 When decay'd, may he mingle his dust with your own.'

Now we positively do assert, that there is nothing better than these stanzas in the whole compass of the noble minor's volume.

Lord Byron should also have a care of attempting what the greatest poets have done before him, for comparisons (as he must have had occasion to see at his writing-master's) are odious.—Gray's Ode on Eton College, should really have kept out the ten hobbling stanzas (on a distant view of the village and school of Harrow).

'Where fancy, yet, joys to retrace the resemblance,
 Of comrades, in friendship and mischief allied;
 How welcome to me, your ne'er fading remembrance,
 Which rests in the bosom, though hope is deny'd!'

In like manner, the exquisite lines of Mr. Rogers, '*On a Tear*,' might have warned the noble author off those premises, and spared us a whole dozen such stanzas as the following.

'Mild Charity's glow,
 To us mortals below,
 Shows the soul from barbarity clear;
 Compassion will melt,
 Where this virtue is felt,
 And its dew is diffus'd in a Tear.

The man doom'd to sail,
 With the blast of the gale,
 Through billows Atlantic to steer,
 As he bends o'er the wave,
 Which may soon be his grave,
 The green sparkles bright with a Tear.'

Ancestry.

IT is a sort of privilege of poets to be egotists; but they should 'use it as not abusing it;' and particularly one who piques himself (though indeed at the ripe age of nineteen), of being 'an infant bard,'—('The artless Helicon I boast is youth;')—should either not know, or should seem not to know, so much about his own ancestry. Besides a poem above cited on the family seat of the Byrons, we have another of eleven pages, on the self-same subject, introduced with an apology, 'he certainly had no intention of inserting it;' but really, 'the particular request of some friends,' &c. &c. It concludes with five stanzas on himself, 'the last and youngest of a noble line.' There is a good deal also about his maternal ancestors, in a poem on Lachin-y-gair, a mountain where he spent part of his youth, and might have learnt that *pibroch* is not a bagpipe, any more than duet means a fiddle.

A lordly condescension to authorship.

BUT whatever judgment may be passed on the poems of this noble minor, it seems we must take them as we find them, and be content; for they are the last we shall ever have from him. He is at best, he says, but an intruder into the groves of Parnassus; he never lived in a garret, like thoroughbred poets; and 'though he once roved a careless mountaineer in the Highlands of Scotland,' he has not of late enjoyed this advantage. Moreover, he expects no profit from his publication; and whether it succeeds or not, 'it is highly improbable, from his situation and pursuits hereafter,' that he should again condescend to become an author. Therefore, let us take what we can get and be thankful. What right have we poor devils to be nice? We are well off to have got so much from a man of this Lord's station, who does not live in a garret, but 'has the sway' of Newstead Abbey. Again, we say, let us be thankful; and, with honest Sancho, bid God bless the giver, nor look the gift horse in the mouth.

Edinburgh Review, Jan., 1808.

SCOTT ON BYRON

The Scott-Byron Quarrel is Made Up.

Scott was one of the poets to whom Byron had something to say in his satire—"English Bards and Scotch Reviewers"—being apparently under the impression that the author of "Marmion" had been concerned with the criticism of "Hours of Idleness" in the Edinburgh Review. Scott was too good-natured a man to take the attack seriously, and as soon as Murray attempted to bring about a reconciliation the opportunity was taken. It is noteworthy that all that Byron could find to bring against Scott was the fact that he had sold "Marmion" for a big sum of money.

The references to Scott in the poem were these:

Thus Lays of Minstrels—may they be the last!—
 On half-strung harps whine mournful to the blast.
 While mountain spirits prate to river sprites,
 That dames may listen to the sound at nights;
 And goblin brats, of Gilpin Horner's brood,
 Decoy young border-nobles through the wood,
 And skip at every step, Lord knows how high,
 And frighten foolish babes the Lord knows why;
 While high-born ladies in their magic cell,
 Forbidding knights to read who cannot spell,
 Despatch a courier to a wizard's grave,
 And fight with honest men to shield a knave.

Next view in state, proud prancing on his roan,
 The golden-crested haughty Marmion,
 Now forging scrolls, now foremost in the fight,
 Not quite a felon, yet but half a knight,
 The gibbet or the field prepared to grace;
 A mighty mixture of the great and base.
 And think'st thou, Scott! by vain conceit perchance,
 On public taste to foist thy stale romance,
 Though Murray with his Miller may combine
 To yield the Muse just half-a-crown per line?
 No! when the sons of song descend to trade,
 Their bays are sere, their former laurels fade.
 Let such forego the poet's sacred name,
 Who rack their brains for lucre, not for fame!
 Still for stern Mammon may they toil in vain!
 And sadly gaze on gold they cannot gain!

Such be their meed, such still the just reward
 Of prostituted muse and hireling bard!
 For this we spurn Apollo's venal son,
 And bid a long "good night to Marmion."

Later in the same poem, he is mildly complimentary:

And thou, too, Scott! resign to minstrels rude
 The wilder slogan of a border feud!
 Let others spin their meagre lines for hire;
 Enough for genius, if itself inspire!

And, a few lines further on,

But thou, with powers that mock the aid of praise,
 Shouldst leave to humbler bards ignoble lays:
 Thy country's voice, the voice of all the nine,
 Demand a hallow'd harp—that harp is thine.
 Say! will not Caledonia's annals yield
 The glorious record of some nobler field,
 Than the wild foray of a plundering clan,
 Whose proudest deeds disgrace the name of man?
 Or Marmion's acts of darkness, fitter food
 For Sherwood's outlaw tales of Robin Hood?
 Scotland! still proudly claim thy native bard,
 And be thy praise his first, his best reward!
 Yet not with thee alone his name should live,
 But own the vast renown a world can give:
 Be known, perchance, when Albion is no more,
 And tell the tale of what she was before
 To future times her faded fame recall,
 And save her glory, though his country fall.

In 1809 Scott, in a letter to Southey, refers to these lines:

... IN the meantime, it is funny enough to see a whelp of a young Lord Byron abusing me, of whose circumstances he knows nothing, for endeavouring to scratch out a living with my pen. God help the bear, if, having little else to eat, he must not even suck his own paws. I can assure the noble imp of fame it is not my fault that I was not born to a park and £5000 a year, as it is not his lordship's merit, although it may be his great good fortune, that he was not born to live by his literary talents or success.

LOCKHART. *Life of Scott.*

Later, in 1830, writing an introduction to "Marmion," Scott has this:

WHEN Byron wrote his famous satire, I had my share of flagellation among my betters. My crime was having written a poem for a thousand pounds, which was not otherwise true than that I sold the copyright for that sum. Now, not to mention that an author can hardly be censured for accepting such a sum as the booksellers are willing to give him, especially as the gentlemen of the trade made no complaints of their bargain, I thought the interference with my private affairs was rather beyond the limits of literary satire. I was, moreover, so far from having had anything to do with the offensive criticism in the Edinburgh, that I had remonstrated with the editor, because I thought the 'Hours of Idleness' treated with undue severity. They were written, like all juvenile poetry, rather from the recollection of what had pleased the author in others, than what had been suggested by his own imagination; but nevertheless I thought they contained passages of noble promise.

After the appearance of the first cantos of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," which were received by the Edinburgh critics in a very different spirit, Scott wrote to his friend, Mr. Morritt (of Rokeby), this appreciation of the poem:

I AGREE very much in what you say of Childe Harold. Though there is something provoking and insulting to morality and to feeling in his misanthropical ennui, it gives, nevertheless, an odd piquancy to his descriptions and reflections. This is upon the whole a piece of most extraordinary merit, and may rank its author with our best poets. I see the Edinburgh Review has hauled its wind.

Life of Scott.

Mr. Murray, the publisher of "Childe Harold", communicated to Scott some particulars of Lord Byron's introduction to the Regent, thinking that thus he might afford an opportunity of a personal explanation between his two poetical friends. Scott immediately wrote Byron a long letter, expressing the pleasure he had received from reading "Childe Harold" and taking occasion at the same time to

"put your Lordship right in the circumstances respecting the sale of Marmion."

Byron replied without loss of time, making the amende honorable to the best of his ability:

I FEEL sorry that you should have thought it worth while to notice the evil works of my nonage, as the thing is suppressed *voluntarily*, and your explanation is too kind not to give me pain. The Satire was written when I was very young and very angry, and fully bent on displaying my wrath and my wit, and now I am haunted by the ghosts of my wholesale assertions. I cannot sufficiently thank you for your praise; and now, waiving myself, let me talk to you of the Prince Regent. He ordered me to be presented to him at a ball, and after some sayings, peculiarly pleasing from royal lips, as to my own attempts, he talked to me of you and your immortalities; he preferred you to every bard past and present, and asked which of your works pleased me most. It was a difficult question. I answered, I thought the Lay. He said his own opinion was nearly similar. In speaking of the others, I told him that I thought you more particularly the poet of *Princes*, as *they* never appeared more fascinating than in *Marmion* and the *Lady of the Lake*. He was pleased to coincide, and to dwell on the description of your Jameses as no less royal than poetical. He spoke alternately of Homer and yourself, and seemed well acquainted with both; so that (with the exception of the Turks¹ and your humble servant) you were in very good company. I defy Murray to have exaggerated his Royal Highness's opinion of your powers, nor can I pretend to enumerate all he said on the subject; but it may give you pleasure to hear that it was conveyed in language which would only suffer by my attempting to transcribe it; and with a tone and taste which gave me a very high idea of his abilities and accomplishments, which I had hitherto considered as confined to *manners*, certainly superior to those of any living gentleman. . . .

Life of Scott.

In the Spring of 1815 the two poets actually met. Scott's account is in a letter to Moore, quoted by Lockhart. Here are a few extracts from the letter:

¹ A Turkish ambassador and his suite figured at the ball.

It was in the spring of 1815, that, chancing to be in London, I had the advantage of a personal introduction to Lord Byron. Report had prepared me to meet a man of peculiar habits and a quick temper, and I had some doubts whether we were likely to suit each other in society. I was most agreeably disappointed in this respect. I found Lord Byron in the highest degree courteous, and even kind. We met for an hour or two almost daily, in Mr. Murray's drawing-room, and found a great deal to say to each other. We also met frequently in parties and evening society, so that for about two months I had the advantage of a considerable intimacy with this distinguished individual.

Extent of Byron's reading.

LORD BYRON's reading did not seem to me to have been very extensive, either in poetry or history. Having the advantage of him in that respect, and possessing a good competent share of such reading as is little read, I was sometimes able to put under his eye objects which had for him the interest of novelty. I remember particularly repeating to him the fine poem of Hardyknute, an imitation of the old Scottish ballad, with which he was so much affected, that some one who was in the same apartment asked me what I could possibly have been telling Byron by which he was so much agitated.

Scott's treatment of Byron when melancholy.

I THINK I can add little more to my recollections of Byron. He was often melancholy—almost gloomy. When I observed him in this humour, I used either to wait till it went off of its own accord, or till some natural and easy mode occurred of leading him into conversation, when the shadows almost always left his countenance, like the mist rising from a landscape. In conversation he was very animated. . . .

I think I also remarked in Byron's temper starts of suspicion, when he seemed to pause and consider whether there had not been a secret, and perhaps offensive, meaning in something casually said to him. In this case, I also judged it best to let his mind, like a troubled spring, work itself clear, which it did in a minute or two. . . .

Life of Scott.

Scott gave Byron a "beautiful dagger mounted with gold, which had been the property of the redoubted Elfi Bey," while Byron sent him, in turn, a large sepulchral vase of silver, containing bones found within the walls of Athens.

This summing up of Scott's opinion of Byron is to be found in his *Diary*.

HE loved to be thought woful, mysterious, and gloomy, and sometimes hinted at strange causes. I believe the whole to have been the creation and sport of a wild and powerful fancy. In the same manner he *crammed* people, as it is termed, about duels and the like, which never existed, or were much exaggerated.

What I liked about Byron, besides his boundless genius, was his generosity of spirit as well as purse, and his utter contempt of all the affectations of literature, from the school-magisterial style to the lackadaisical. His example has formed a sort of upper house of poetry;—but

"There will be many peers
Ere such another Byron!"

LOCKHART. *Life of Scott.*

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE ON BYRON

A few general observations from the Blackwood Review of "Manfred." A Dramatic Poem. By Lord Byron. 8vo. Murray, London, 1817.

LORD BYRON has been elected by acclamation to the throne of poetical supremacy; nor are we disposed to question his title to the crown. There breathes over all his genius an air of kingly dignity; strength, vigour, energy, are his attributes; and he wields his faculties with a proud consciousness of their power, and a confident anticipation of their effect. Living poets perhaps there are, who have taken a wider range, but none who have achieved such complete, such perfect triumphs. In no great attempt has he ever failed; and, soon as he begins his flight, we feel that he is to soar upon unflagging wings—that when he has reached the black and tempestuous elevation of his favourite atmosphere, he will, eagle-like, sail on undisturbed through the heart of clouds, storms, and darkness.

When this dark and powerful spirit for a while withdraws

from the contemplation of his own wild world, and condescends to look upon the ordinary shews and spectacles of life, he often seems unexpectedly to participate in the feelings and emotions of beings with whom it might be thought he could claim no kindred; and thus many passages are to be found in his poetry, of the most irresistible and overpowering pathos, in which the depth of his sympathy with common sorrows and common sufferers, seems as profound as if his nature knew nothing more mournful than sighs and tears.

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. June, 1817.

SAMUEL ROGERS ON BYRON

Byron dines with Rogers—and Others.

NEITHER Moore nor myself had ever seen Byron when it was settled that he should dine at my house to meet Moore; nor was he known by sight to Campbell, who, happening to call upon me that morning, consented to join the party. I thought it best that I alone should be in the drawing-room when Byron entered it; and Moore and Campbell accordingly withdrew. Soon after his arrival, they returned; and I introduced them to him severally, naming them as Adam named the beasts. When we sat down to dinner, I asked Byron if he would take soup? "No; he never took soup."—Would he take some fish? "No; he never took fish."—Presently I asked if he would eat some mutton? "No; he never ate mutton."—I then asked him if he would take a glass of wine? "No; he never tasted wine."—It was now necessary to inquire what he *did* eat and drink; and the answer was, "Nothing but hard biscuits and soda-water." Unfortunately, neither hard biscuits nor soda-water were at hand; and he dined upon potatoes bruised down on his plate and drenched with vinegar.—My guests stayed till very late, discussing the merits of Walter Scott and Joanna Baillie.—Some days after, meeting Hobhouse, I said to him, "How long will Lord Byron persevere in his present diet?" He replied, "Just as long as you continue to notice it."—I did not then know, what I now know to be a fact,—that Byron, after leaving my house, had gone to a Club in St. James's Street, and eaten a hearty meat supper.

ROGERS. *Table-Talk.*

WORDSWORTH ON BYRON

Wordsworth has his say on Byron.

BYRON seems to me deficient in *feeling*.

Lord Byron has spoken severely of my compositions. However faulty they may be, I do not think that I ever could have prevailed upon myself to print such lines as he has done; for instance,

‘I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs,
A palace and a prison on each hand.’

Some person ought to write a critical review analysing Lord Byron’s language, in order to guard others against imitating him in these respects.

WORDSWORTH. *Prose Works.*

LEIGH HUNT ON BYRON

Byron’s appearance in youth.

LORD BYRON’s appearance at that time (about 1815) was the finest I ever saw it. He was fatter than before his marriage, but only just enough so to complete the elegance of his person; and the turn of his head and countenance had a spirit and elevation in it which, though not unmixed with disquiet, gave him altogether a very noble look. His dress, which was black, with white trousers, and which he wore buttoned close over the body, completed the succinctness and gentlemanliness of his appearance.

LEIGH HUNT. *Autobiography.*

At a later date (about 1822) when Hunt was living with Byron at Pisa.

OUR manner of life was this. Lord Byron, who used to sit up at night writing *Don Juan* (which he did under the influence of gin and water), rose late in the morning. He breakfasted; read; lounged about, singing an air, generally out of Rossini; then took a bath, and was dressed; and coming down stairs, was heard, still singing, in the court-yard, out of which the garden ascended, by a few steps, at the back of the house. The servants, at the same time, brought out two or three chairs. My study, a little room in a corner, with an orange-tree at the

window, looked upon this courtyard. I was generally at my writing when he came down, and either acknowledged his presence by getting up and saying something, from the window, or he called out "Leontius!" (a name into which Shelley had pleasantly converted that of "Leigh Hunt") and came up to the window with some jest or other challenge to conversation. His dress, as at Monte Nero, was a nankin jacket, with white waistcoat and trousers, and a cap, either velvet or linen, with a shade to it. In his hand was a tobacco-box, from which he helped himself occasionally to what he thought a preservative from getting too fat. Perhaps, also, he supposed it good for the teeth.

LEIGH HUNT. *Autobiography.*

Byron in Italy.

LORD BYRON, besides being a lord, was a man of letters, and he was extremely desirous of the approbation of men of letters. He loved to enjoy the privileges of his rank, and at the same time to be thought above them. It is true, if he thought you not above them yourself, he was the better pleased. On this account among others, no man was calculated to delight him to a higher degree than Thomas Moore; who with every charm he wished for in a companion, and a reputation for independence and liberal opinion, admired both genius and title for their own sakes. But his Lordship did not always feel quite secure of the bon-mots of his brother wit. His conscience had taught him suspicion; and it was a fault with him and his *coterie*, as it is with most, that they all talked too much of each other behind their backs. But "admiration at all events" was his real motto. If he thought you an admirer of titles, he was well pleased that you should add that homage to the other, without investigating it too nicely. If not, he was anxious that you should not suppose him too anxious about the matter.

Byron's too royal familiarities.

THE familiarities of my noble acquaintance, which I had taken at first for a compliment and a cordiality, were dealt out in equal portions to all who came near him. They proceeded upon that royal instinct of an immeasurable distance between the parties, the safety of which, it is thought, can be compromised by no appearance of encouragement. The farther you are

off, the more securely the personage may indulge your good opinion of him. The greater his merits, and the more transporting his condescension, the less can you be so immodest as to have pretensions of your own. You may be intoxicated into familiarity. That is excusable, though not desirable. But not to be intoxicated any how,—not to show any levity, and yet not to be possessed with a seriousness of the pleasure, is an offence. . . . As it was, there was something not unsocial nor even unenjoying in our intercourse, nor was there any appearance of constraint; but, upon the whole, it was not pleasant: it was not cordial. There was a sense of mistake on both sides. However, this came by degrees. At first there was hope, which I tried hard to indulge; and there was always some joking going forward; some melancholy mirth, which a spectator might have mistaken for pleasure.

Pleasantest when slightly intoxicated.

it is a credit to my noble acquaintance, that he was by far the pleasantest when he had got wine in his head. The only time I invited myself to dine with him, I told him I did it on that account, and that I meant to push the bottle so, that he should intoxicate me with his good company. He said he would have a set-to, but he never did it. I believe he was afraid. It was a little before he left Italy; and there was a point in contest between us (not regarding myself) which he thought perhaps I should persuade him to give up. When in his cups, which was not often, nor immoderately, he was inclined to be tender; but not weakly so, nor lachrymose. I know not how it might have been with every body, but he paid me the compliment of being excited to his very best feelings; and when I rose late to go away, he would hold me down, and say with a look of intreaty, "Not yet." Then it was that I seemed to talk with the proper natural Byron as he ought to have been; and there was not a sacrifice I could not have made to keep him in that temper; and see his friends love him, as much as the world admired. Next morning it was all gone. His intimacy with the worst part of mankind had got him again in its chilling crust; and nothing remained but to despair and joke.

A Discourse on Eugenics.

I LOOK upon Lord Byron as an excessive instance of what we see in hundreds of cases every day; namely, of the unhappy consequences of a parentage that ought never to have existed,—of the perverse and discordant humours of those who were the authors of his being. His father was a rake of the wildest description; his mother a violent woman, very unfit to improve the offspring of such a person. She would vent her spleen by loading her child with reproaches; and add, by way of securing their bad effect, that he would be as great a reprobate as his father. Thus did his parents embitter his nature: thus they embittered his memory of them, contradicted his beauty with deformity, and completed the mischances of his existence. Perhaps both of them had a goodness at heart, which had been equally perplexed. It is not that individuals are to blame, or that human nature is bad; but that experience has not yet made it wise enough. Animal beauty they had at least a sense of. In this our poet was conceived; but contradiction of all sorts was super-added, and he was born handsome, wilful, and lame. A happy childhood might have corrected his evil tendencies; but he had it not; and the upshot was, that he spent an uneasy over-excited life, and that society have got an amusing book or two by his misfortunes.

His appearance—a lame Apollo, with reservations.

LORD BYRON's face was handsome; eminently so in some respects. He had a mouth and chin fit for Apollo; and when I first knew him, there were both lightness and energy all over his aspect. But his countenance did not improve with age, and there were always some defects in it. The jaw was too big for the upper part. It had all the wilfulness of a despot in it. The animal predominated over the intellectual part of his head, inasmuch as the face altogether was large in proportion to the skull. The eyes also were set too near one another; and the nose, though handsome in itself, had the appearance when you saw it closely in front, of being grafted on the face, rather than growing properly out of it. His person was very handsome, though terminating in lameness, and tending to fat and effeminacy; which makes one remember what a hostile fair one

objected to him, namely, that he had little beard; a fault which, on the other hand, was thought by another lady, not hostile, to add to the divinity of his aspect,—*imberbis Apollo*. His lameness was only in one foot, the left; and it was so little visible to casual notice, that as he lounged about a room (which he did in such a manner as to screen it) it was hardly perceptible. But it was a real and even a sore lameness. Much walking upon it fevered and hurt it. It was a shrunken foot, a little twisted. This defect unquestionably mortified him exceedingly, and helped to put sarcasm and misanthropy into his taste of life. . . .

LEIGH HUNT. *Ibid.*

His conversation.

LORD BYRON had no conversation, properly speaking. He could not interchange ideas or information with you, as a man of letters is expected to do. His thoughts required the concentration of silence and study to bring them to a head; and they deposited the amount in the shape of a stanza. His acquaintance with books was very circumscribed. The same personal experience, however, upon which he very properly drew for his authorship, might have rendered him a companion more interesting by far than men who could talk better; and the great reason why his conversation disappointed you was, not that he had not any thing to talk about, but that he was haunted with a perpetual affectation, and could not talk sincerely. It was by fits only that he spoke with any gravity, or made his extraordinary disclosures; and at no time did you well know what to believe. The rest was all quip and crank, not of the pleasantest kind, and equally distant from simplicity or wit. The best thing to say of it was, that he knew playfulness to be consistent with greatness; and the worst, that he thought every thing in him was great, even to his vulgarities.

LEIGH HUNT. *Ibid.*

HAZLITT ON BYRON

Hazlitt Analyses the Poetry of Byron.

HE cares little what it is he says, so that he can say it differently from others. This may account for the charges of plagiarism which have been repeatedly brought against the Noble Poet. If he can borrow an image or a sentiment from another, and

heighten it by an epithet or an illusion of greater force and beauty than is to be found in the original passage, he thinks he shows his superiority of execution in this in a more marked manner than if the first suggestion had been his own. It is not the value of the observation itself he is solicitous about; but he wishes to shine by contrast—even nature only serves as a foil to set off his style. He therefore takes the thoughts of others (whether contemporaries or not) out of their mouths, and is content to make them his own, to set his stamp upon them, by imparting to them a more meretricious gloss, a higher relief, a greater loftiness of tone, and a characteristic inveteracy of purpose.

Even in those collateral ornaments of modern style, slovenliness, abruptness, and eccentricity (as well as in terseness and significance), Lord Byron, when he pleases, defies competition and surpasses all his contemporaries. Whatever he does, he must do it in a more decided and daring manner than anyone else; he lounges with extravagance, and yawns so as to alarm the reader! Self-will, passion, the love of singularity, a disdain of himself and of others (with a conscious sense that this is among the ways and means of procuring admiration) are the proper categories of his mind: he is a lordly writer, is above his own reputation, and condescends to the Muses with a scornful grace!

Compares Byron with Scott.

we like a writer (whether poet or prose-writer) who takes in (or is willing to take in) the range of half the universe in feeling, character, description, much better than we do one who obstinately and invariably shuts himself up in the Bastille of his own ruling passions. In short, we had rather be Sir Walter Scott (meaning thereby the author of "Waverley") than Lord Byron a hundred times over, and for the reason just given, namely, that he casts his descriptions in the mould of nature, ever varying, never tiresome, always interesting and always instructive, instead of casting them constantly in the mould of his own individual impressions.

And with Wordsworth.

LORD BYRON does not exhibit a new view of nature, or raise insignificant objects into importance by the romantic associa-

tions with which he surrounds them, but generally (at least) takes commonplace thoughts and events, and endeavours to express them in stronger and statelier language than others. His poetry stands like a Martello-tower by the side of his subject. He does not, like Mr. Wordsworth, lift poetry from the ground, or create a sentiment out of nothing. He does not describe a daisy or a periwinkle, but the cedar or the cypress: not "poor men's cottages, princes' palaces." His "Childe Harold" contains a lofty and impassioned review of the great events of history, of the mighty objects left as wrecks of time; but he dwells chiefly on what is familiar to the mind of every schoolboy, has brought out few new traits of feeling or thought, and has done no more than justice to the reader's preconceptions by the sustained force and brilliancy of his style and imagery.

The Peer as Poet.

HIS "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" is dogmatical and insolent, but without refinement or point. He calls people names, and tries to transfix a character with an epithet, which does not stick, because it has no other foundation than his own petulance and spite; or he endeavours to degrade by alluding to some circumstance of external situation. He says of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, that "it is his aversion." That may be: but whose fault is it? This is the satire of a lord, who is accustomed to have all his whims or dislikes taken for gospel, and who cannot be at the pains to do more than signify his contempt or displeasure. . . . So his Lordship in a "Letter to the Editor of my Grandmother's Review," addresses him fifty times as "*my dear Robarts;*" nor is there any other wit in the article. This is surely a mere assumption of superiority from his Lordship's rank, and is the sort of *quizzing* he might use to a person who came to hire himself as a valet to him at *Long's*. The waiters might laugh; the public will not.

On Travestying Oneself.

THE "Don Juan" indeed has great power; but the power is owing to the force of the serious writing, and to the contrast between that and the flashy passages with which it is inter-

larded. From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step. You laugh and are surprised that any one should turn round and *travestie* himself: the drollery is in the utter discontinuity of ideas and feelings. He makes virtue serve as a foil to vice; *dandyism* is (for want of any other) a variety of genius. After the lightning and the hurricane, we are introduced to the interior of the cabin and the contents of the wash-hand basins.

The noble Lord is almost the only writer who has prostituted his talents in this way. He hallows in order to desecrate, takes a pleasure in defacing the images of beauty his hands have wrought, and raises our hopes and our belief in goodness to heaven only to dash them to the earth again, and break them in pieces the more effectually from the very height they have fallen. . . . It is not that Lord Byron is sometimes serious and sometimes trifling, sometimes profligate and sometimes moral, but when he is most serious and most moral, he is only preparing to mortify the unsuspecting reader by putting a pitiful *hoax* upon him. This is a most unaccountable anomaly. It is as if the eagle were to build its eyry in a common sewer, or the owl were seen soaring to the midday sun. Such a sight might make one laugh, but one would not wish or expect it to occur more than once!

HAZLITT. *The Spirit of the Age.*

KEATS ON BYRON

Keats and "Don Juan."

AFTER the tempest¹ had subsided, Keats was reading the description of a storm in 'Don Juan,' and cast the book on the floor in a transport of indignation. 'How horrible an example of human nature,' he cried, 'is this man, who has no pleasure left him but to gloat over and jeer at the most awful incidents of life. Oh! this is a paltry originality, which consists in making solemn things gay, and gay things solemn, and yet it will fascinate thousands, by the very diabolical outrage of their sympathies. Byron's perverted education makes him assume to feel, and try to impart to others, those depraved sensations which the want of any education excites in many.'

LORD HOUGHTON. *Life of Keats.*

¹ A storm in the Bay of Biscay.

Keats on the difference between his work and Byron's. From a letter to George Keats, dated Sept., 1819.

you speak of Lord Byron and me. There is this great difference between us: he describes what he sees—I describe what I imagine. Mine is the hardest task; now see the immense difference. The Edinburgh Review are afraid to touch upon my poem. They do not know what to make of it; they do not like to condemn it, and they will not praise it for fear. They are as shy of it as I should be of wearing a Quaker's hat. The fact is they have no real taste. . . .

JOHN KEATS. *Letters.*

SOUTHEY ON BYRON

From a letter to John Rickman, dated Jan. 27, 1821, in which Southey enlarges on his "Vision of Judgement" and the effects it is likely to produce.

. . . IN the course of a fortnight you will receive the book. The hexameters have nothing uncouth in their appearance, the type being adapted to their *longitude* rather than to the size of the page; and for their effect upon the ear, it must be a stubborn prejudice that maintains its ground against them. But a good pelting shower of abuse I shall have *sans* doubt, having with some ingenuity contrived to give matter, or pretext, of offence to all parties, like a very Ishmaelite. For I have neither placed Pitt nor Fox among the worthies of the late reign; and you may easily guess how that sin of omission will be resented. Then in the preface I have a passage, by no means weakly worded, which my worthy friends Lord Byron and Moore will take to themselves, as a set-off in part, against some obligations due to them. . . .

WARTER. *Letters of Robert Southey.*

From a letter to the Rev. Herbert Hill, dated Jan. 25, 1822.

. . . I HEAR from various quarters that my reply to Lord Byron's blackguardism is producing the effect which was intended upon others, however he may take it. I have no desire to pursue the matter further, but, if need be, I shall have no great reluctance to it; there are plenty of smooth stones in the brook, my arm

is in good order, and I am sure of my aim. These things in no degree disturb me. I see some strong hand at Oxford has taken up his "Cain" (which I have not seen). If he compels me to engage with him again, I will brand him in such a manner as will exclude him from all society in England in which character is considered to be a necessary qualification. The truth is, he is desperate. He has (I know) sent over for publication things more atrocious than any which have yet appeared, and such as none but the *âmes damnées* of the trade will venture to publish. Murray is upon a bed of thorns which he has made for himself.

WARTER. *Letters of Robert Southey.*

I dare say not many of the general public now read "The Vision of Judgement", by Southey, in which he sets forth, in rather halting hexameters, his idea of how Heaven received the spirit of George III. His Preface is occupied chiefly in justifying, or attempting to justify, his choice of metre, and incidentally in having a dig at the works of Lord Byron, whom indeed he had no great cause to love. In his own "Vision of Judgment" (without the e) Byron also has a preface, which will be found under the head of Robert Southey. The following passage is from Section III of Southey's preface. Turning from metre to morals, the Laureate writes:

I AM well aware that the public are peculiarly intolerant of such innovations; no less so than the populace used to be of any foreign fashion, whether of foppery or convenience. Would that this literary intolerance were under the influence of a saner judgement, and regarded the morals more than the manner of a composition; the spirit rather than the form! Would that it were directed against those monstrous combinations of horrors and mockery, lewdness and impiety, with which English poetry has, in our days, first been polluted! For more than half a century English literature had been distinguished by its moral purity, the effect, and in its turn, the cause of an improvement in national manners. A father might, without apprehension of evil, have put into the hands of his children any book which issued from the press, if it did not bear, either in its title-page or frontispiece, manifest signs that it was intended as furniture for the brothel. There was no danger in any work which bore the name of a respectable publisher, or was to be

procured at any respectable bookseller's. This was particularly the case with regard to our poetry. It is now no longer so; and woe to those by whom the offence cometh! The greater the talents of the offender, the greater is his guilt, and the more enduring will be his shame. Whether it be that the laws are in themselves unable to abate an evil of this magnitude, or whether it be that they are remissly administered, and with such injustice that the celebrity of an offender serves as a privilege whereby he obtains impunity, individuals are bound to consider that such pernicious works would neither be published nor written, if they were discouraged as they might, and ought to be, by public feeling; every person, therefore, who purchases such books, or admits them into his house, promotes the mischief, and thereby, as far as in him lies, becomes an aider and abettor of the crime.

The publication of a lascivious book is one of the worst offences that can be committed against the well-being of society. It is a sin; to the consequences of which no limits can be assigned, and those consequences no after repentance in the writer can counteract. Whatever remorse of conscience he may feel when his hour comes (and come it must!) will be of no avail. The poignancy of a death-bed repentance cannot cancel one copy of the thousands which are sent abroad; and as long as it continues to be read, so long is he the pander of posterity, and so long is he heaping up guilt upon his soul in perpetual accumulation.

These remarks are not more severe than the offence deserves, even when applied to those immoral writers who have not been conscious of any evil intention in their writings, who would acknowledge a little levity, a little warmth of colouring, and so forth, in that sort of language with which men gloss over their favourite vices, and deceive themselves. What then should be said of those for whom the thoughtlessness and ineptitude of wanton youth can no longer be pleaded, but who have written in sober manhood and with deliberate purpose? . . . Men of diseased hearts and depraved imaginations, who, forming a system of opinions to suit their own unhappy course of conduct, have rebelled against the holiest ordinances of human society, and hating that revealed religion which, with all their efforts and bravadoes, they are unable entirely to disbelieve,

labour to make others as miserable as themselves, by infecting them with a moral virus that eats into the soul! The school which they have set up may properly be called the Satanic school; for though their productions breathe the spirit of Belial in their lascivious parts, and the spirit of Moloch in those loathsome images of atrocities and horrors which they delight to represent, they are more especially characterised by a Satanic spirit of pride and audacious impiety, which still betrays the wretched feeling of hopelessness, wherewith it is allied.

SOUTHEY. *Vision of Judgement* (preface).

THE BRITISH REVIEW ON BYRON

Byron and "My Grandmother's Review."

The following lines appear at the close of the first canto of "Don Juan":

The public approbation I expect,
 And beg they'll take my word about the moral,
 Which I with their amusement will connect
 (So children cutting teeth receive a coral!)
 Meantime they'll doubtless please to recollect
 My epical pretensions to the laurel;
 For fear some prudish readers should grow skittish,
 I've bribed my grandmother's review—the British.

I sent it in a letter to the Editor,
 Who thank'd me duly by return of post—
 I'm for a handsome article his creditor;
 Yet, if my gentle Muse he please to roast,
 And break a promise after having made it her,
 Denying the receipt of what it cost,
 And smear his page with gall instead of honey,
 All I can say is—that he had the money.

The British Review, being a sober and staid High Church periodical, took this accusation seriously. The following is taken from their notice of "Don Juan" on its appearance.

no misdemeanour—not even that of sending into the world obscene and blasphemous poetry, the product of studious lewdness and laboured impiety—appears to us in so detest-

able a light as the acceptance of a present by an editor of a review as the condition of praising the author; and yet the miserable man (for miserable he is, as having a soul of which he cannot get rid) who has given birth to this pestilent poem has not scrupled to lay this to the charge of the *British Review*, and that, not by insinuation, but has actually stated himself to have sent money in a letter to the editor of this journal, who acknowledged the receipt of the same by a letter in return with thanks.

British Review, 1819.

TRELAWNY¹ ON BYRON

Byron at thirty-four.

IN external appearance Byron realised that ideal standard with which imagination adorns genius. He was in the prime of life, thirty-four; of middle height, five feet eight and a half inches; regular features, without a stain or a furrow on his pallid skin, his shoulders broad, chest open, body and limbs finely proportioned. His small highly-finished head and curly hair had an airy and graceful appearance from the massiveness and length of his throat: you saw his genius in his eyes and lips. In short, Nature could do little more than she had done for him, both in outward form and in the inward spirit she had given to animate it. But all these rare gifts to his jaundiced imagination only served to make his one personal defect (lame-ness) the more apparent, as a flaw is magnified in a diamond when polished; and he brooded over that blemish as sensitive minds will brood until they magnify a wart into a wen.

TRELAWNY. *Records of Shelley, Byron and the Author.*

B. W. PROCTER ("BARRY CORNWALL") ON BYRON

"*Barry Cornwall*" had been a contemporary of Byron's at Harrow, where he speaks in his "*Autobiographical Fragments*" of two of his fellow-pupils who "became very remarkable." One (Sir Robert Peel) toiled and struggled upwards, until he became a Minister of

¹ Edward John Trelawny, 1792-1881, had a varied and adventurous life. He was Shelley's cousin and was practically a witness of the fatal accident; he was also associated with Byron in his Hellenic enterprise. His subsequent handling of these reminiscences excited a good deal of adverse comment.

State. Another (Byron) blossomed into a poet. "There were, however, in the latter, during his school-time, no symptoms of such a destiny. He was loud, even coarse, and very capable of a boy's vulgar enjoyments. He played at hockey and racquets, and was occasionally engaged in pugilistic combats." In his "Recollections of Men of Letters" he speaks of him in more favourable terms:

I HAD previously taken great interest in the fame of Lord Byron (with whom I had been at school, at Harrow), and I resented these prophecies¹, which, however, need not have annoyed me, for Lord Byron was incontestably a very powerful writer, and in 1818 was the most popular poet of his day. I had not seen him since about 1800, when he was a scholar in Dr. Drury's house, with an iron cramp on one of his feet, with loose corduroy trousers plentifully relieved by ink, and with fingernails bitten to the quick. He was then a rough, curly-headed boy, and apparently nothing more. In 1817 he had passed through various gradations of refinement; was a dandy, a handsome polished travelled man of the world, and was surmounted by a reputation outshining that of every contemporary poet.

B. W. PROCTER. *Recollections of Men of Letters.*

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR ON BYRON

Landor criticises Byron.

IN Byron there is much to admire but nothing to imitate: for energy is beyond the limits of imitation. Byron could not have written better than he did. Altho' he seems negligent in many places, he was very assiduous in correcting his verses. His poetry took the bent of a wayward and perverted mind often weak, but oftener perturbed. Tho' hemp and flax and cotton are the stronger for being twisted, verses and intellects certainly are not. . . . It is unfortunate that Ariosto did not attract him (Byron) first. Byron had not in his nature amenity enough for it, and chose Berni in preference, and fell from Berni to Casti. But his scorching and dewless heat burnt up their flowery meadows.

W. S. LANDOR. *Letters.*

¹ That the Rev. George Croly, author of "Paris in 1815", was destined to "push Byron from his throne."

CHARLES LAMB ON BYRON

Charles Lamb had a very poor opinion of Byron as a man, and did not think too highly of him as a poet. The following is taken from a letter to Joseph Cottle, dated 1819.

IT was quite a mistake that I could dislike anything you could write against Lord Byron; for I have a thorough aversion to his character, and a very moderate admiration of his genius: he is great in so little a way. To be a Poet is to be the Man, not a petty portion of occasional low passion worked up in a permanent form of humanity. Shakspeare has thrust such rubbishy feelings into a corner,—the dark dusky heart of Don John, in the *Much Ado about Nothing*. The fact is, I have not seen your “Expostulatory Epistle” to him. I was not aware, till your question, that it was out. I shall inquire, and get it forthwith.

CHARLES LAMB. *Letters.*

From a letter to Bernard Barton: May 15, 1824.

so we have lost another Poet. I never much relished his Lordship's mind, and shall be sorry if the Greeks have cause to miss him. He was to me offensive, and I never can make out his great power, which his admirers talk of. Why, a line of Wordsworth's is a lever to lift the immortal spirit! Byron can only move the Spleen. He was at best a Satyrist,—in any other way he was mean enough. I daresay I do him an injustice; but I cannot love him, nor squeeze a tear to his memory. . . .

CHARLES LAMB. *Letters.*

CARLYLE ON BYRON

Carlyle had, at all events in his early days, a higher regard for Byron than one would have imagined. This is a passage from a letter to Jane Welsh, dated in 1822.

BYRON is a person of many high and splendid qualities. If I had his genius and health and liberty, I would make the next three centuries recollect me.

And this from another letter two years later, after the news of his death at Missolonghi:

POOR Byron! Alas poor Byron! The news of his death came down upon my heart like a mass of lead; and yet, the thought of it sends a painful twinge through all my being, as if I had lost a Brother! O God! that so many sons of mud and clay should fill up their base existence to its utmost bound, and this, the noblest spirit in Europe, should sink before half his course was run. Late so full of fire and generous passion, and proud purposes, and now for ever dumb and cold! Poor Byron! And but a young man; still struggling amid the perplexities, and sorrows and aberrations of a mind not yet arrived at maturity or settled in its proper place in life. Had he been spared to the age of three score and ten, what might he not have done, what might he not have been! But we shall hear his voice no more. I dreamed of seeing him and knowing him. . . .

WILSON. *Carlyle Before Marriage.*

SAMUEL ROGERS

1763-1855



James Rogers

THE AUTHOR OF "THE PLEASURES OF MEMORY."

S A M U E L R O G E R S

1763-1855

THE Banker-Poet played the part of Literary Dictator in England for many years. When he wrote "The Pleasures of Memory" (1792), Cowper had only just published his translation of Homer; but he lived long enough to be offered the Laureateship on Wordsworth's death, and to be consulted as to the fitness of Alfred Tennyson for the post. His kindnesses to literary men were innumerable: his breakfasts were famous: to receive an invitation was to enter London literary society. Withal he had the most bitter tongue of his age, for which he excused himself on the ground that his voice was so small that no one listened unless he said something unkind. He was perhaps the slowest of writers. Sydney Smith used to say: "When Rogers produces a couplet, he goes to bed, and the knocker is tied up, and straw is laid down, and the caudle is made, and the answer to inquiries is, that Mr. Rogers is as well as can be expected." He is said to have pored for days over his epigram on Mr. Ward, afterwards Lord Dudley, who had offended him by a reference to his corpse-like appearance:

They say that Ward's no heart, but I deny it,
He has a heart, and gets his speeches by it.

And yet a critic in the *Quarterly Review* actually called him a hasty writer.

The union of banking and poetry has its advantages. Rogers published his "Ode to Superstition" with Cadell, in the Strand, in 1786, leaving his poem at the shop of the publisher with a bank-note to pay for any loss that might be incurred. So, too, his "Italy" (anonymously published in 1822) was at first a failure, but Rogers commissioned illustrations from Turner, Stothard, and Prout, which were sumptuously engraved on steel, and the new edition, brought out in 1830 under his own name, proved a great success. The excellent *note* on this edition—that "it would have been dished but for the plates," has been variously attributed to Sydney Smith, Henry Luttrell, and most of the wits of that epoch. The Dictionary of National Biography gives it to Lady Blessington.

Rogers belonged to the classical school. There was a time when Byron spoke of him, coupled with Campbell, as in his "English Bards":

To the famed throng now paid the tribute due,
 Neglected genius! let me turn to you.
 Come forth, oh Campbell! give thy talents scope;
 Who dares aspire if thou must cease to hope?
 And thou, melodious Rogers! rise at last,
 Recall the pleasing memory of the past;
 Arise! let blest remembrance still inspire,
 And strike to wonted tones thy hallow'd lyre;
 Restore Apollo to his vacant throne,
 Assert the country's honour and thine own.

And in a note to this passage the author added: "It would be superfluous to recall to the mind of the reader the authors of 'The Pleasures of Memory' and 'The Pleasures of Hope,' the most beautiful didactic poems in our language, if we except Pope's 'Essay on Man.'"

One might also quote those "Lines Written on a Blank Leaf" of "The Pleasures of Memory."

Absent or present, still to thee,
 My friend, what magic spells belong!
 As all can tell, who share, like me,
 In turn thy converse and thy song.

But Byron was not a good friend. There was something feline and spiteful about him. The poem in which he described Rogers's personal appearance with so much gusto and detail was, Crabb Robinson tells us, read by the author one afternoon at Lady Blessington's. Rogers, it seems, appeared while the reading was still in progress, and the poem was hastily hidden under a cushion, upon which Byron afterwards persuaded the banker-poet to sit—a piece of jesting which Landor considered ungentlemanly conduct. Lady Blessington, says Crabb Robinson, thought that the verses would kill Rogers if he ever saw them. But they did not, though he was never known to refer to them. He lived into the nineties, and may be pardoned if he became a trifle cynical.

BYRON ON ROGERS

QUESTION.

Nose and chin would shame a knocker,
Wrinkles that would puzzle Cocker;
Mouth which marks the envious scorner,
With a scorpion in each corner,
Turning its quick tail to sting you,
In the place that most may wring you;
Eyes of lead-like hue, and gummy;
Carcase picked out from some mummy;
Bowels (but they were forgotten,
Save the liver, and that's rotten);
Skin all sallow, flesh all sodden—
From the Devil would frighten God in.
Is't a corpse stuck up for show,
Galvanised at times to go'
With the Scripture in connexion,
New proof of the resurrection?
Vampire, ghost, or ghoul, what is it?
I would walk ten miles to miss it.

ANSWER.

Many passengers arrest one,
To demand the same free question.
Shorter's my reply, and franker—
That's the Bard, the Beau, the Banker.
Yet if you could bring about,
Just to turn him inside out,
Satan's self would seem less sooty,
And his present aspect—Beauty.
Mark that (as he marks the bilious
Air so softly supercilious)
Chastened bow, and mock humility,
Almost sickened to servility;
Hear his tone (which is to talking
That which creeping is to walking:
Now on all-fours, now on tip-toe;)
Hear the tales he lends his lip to;
Little hints of heavy scandals;
Every friend in turn he handles;
All which women, or which men do,
Glides forth in an innuendo,

Clothed in odds and ends of humour—
 Herald of each paltry rumour,
 From divorces down to dresses,
 Women's frailties, men's excesses,
 All which life presents of evil
 Makes for him a constant revel.
 You're his foe, for that he fears you,
 And in absence blasts and sears you;
 You're his friend, for that he hates you,
 First caresses, and then baits you;
 Darting on the opportunity
 When to do it with impunity.
 You are neither—then he'll flatter
 Till he finds some trait for satire ;
 Hunts your weak point out, then shows it
 Where it injures to disclose it,
 In the mode that's most invidious,
 Adding every trait that's hideous,
 From the bile whose black'ning river
 Rushes through his Stygian liver.
 Then he thinks himself a lover—
 Why, I really can't discover,
 In his mind, eye, face, or figure;
 Viper-broth might give him vigour;
 Let him keep the cauldron steady,
 He the venom has already.
 For his faults—he has but *one*—
 'Tis but envy, when all's done.
 He but pays the pain he suffers;
 Clipping, like a pair of snuffers,
 Lights which ought to burn the brighter
 For this temporary blighter.
 He's the cancer of his species:
 And will eat himself to pieces,
 Plague personified, and famine;
 Devil, whose sole delight is damning!

For his merits, would you know 'em?
 Once he wrote a pretty poem.

Printed in Fraser's Magazine, Jan., 1833, as "an Unpublished Poem by Lord Byron."

B. W. PROCTER ("BARRY CORNWALL") ON ROGERS

I FORGET who introduced me to Mr. Rogers in the year 1820. He lived then and until his death in Saint James's Place, in a house that had previously belonged to one of the Dukes of St. Alban's. It was not in a wide street, but it looked southward on to the Green Park. Upon the whole I never saw any residence so tastefully fitted up and decorated. Every thing was good of its kind, and in good order. There was no plethora; no appearance of display, no sign of superfluous wealth. There were good pictures, good drawings, and a few good books. He had choice statuettes, some coins, and vases, and some rare bijouterie. There was not too much of any thing, not even too much welcome; yet no lack of it. His breakfast-table was perfect, in all respects; and the company—where literature mixed with fashion and rank, each having a fair proportion—was always agreeable. And in the midst of all his hospitable glory was the little old pleasant man, not yet infirm, with his many anecdotes, and sub-acid words that gave flavour and pungency to the general talk. He dwelt too much (too much for the taste of some of his hearers) on olden times, on the days of Fox and Pitt and Sheridan, all of whom he knew and mentioned with great respect, never omitting the "Mr." previously to each name. Like most other persons he was, perhaps, too much disposed to overvalue the times and people of his youth. Even the authors of the last century, so manifestly inferior to those of the present, found an advocate with him. He admired Gray prodigiously, and had great respect for Mr. Crowe, the Professor of Poetry at Oxford, whose "Lewesdon Hill" he thought to be almost unequalled. He had just begun to admit Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron into his list of deservedly distinguished writers. Crabbe he had always admitted amongst the great authors, because of his style, and Mr. Thomas Moore was rather a favourite by reason of his upholding the merits of Sheridan, whom he (Mr. Rogers) had generously assisted in his later days. He had no imagination, but give him the thing imagined, and (if he liked it) he was tolerably sure to suggest some improvement to it. "Rogers' rhymes" (which Lord Byron has praised) moved on harmonious hinges; but they on no occasion had that free spontaneous sound which the lines of the

higher poets possess. I like the versification in his poem of "Jacqueline" the best.

It has been rumoured that he was a sayer of bitter things. I know that he was a *giver* of good things—a kind and amiable patron, where a patron was wanted; never ostentatious or oppressive, and always a friend in need. He was ready with his counsel; ready with his money. I never put his generosity to the test, but I know enough to testify that it existed, and was often exercised in a delicate manner, and on the slightest hint. "I have received the kindest letter in the world from Rogers," said X—one day, "inclosing a fifty pound note. God knows, it did not come before it was wanted." It appeared that a friend of mine had casually mentioned X's great distress, his struggles for bread, and his large family, a few days previously to Rogers, who made no observation beyond a little sympathy, but he took the opportunity of silently giving the money without parade.

B. W. PROCTER. *Recollections of Men of Letters*:

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD ON ROGERS

Miss Mitford and Mr. Rogers's new poem. Dated April, 1819.

"HUMAN LIFE," Mr. Rogers's new poem, elegant, polished, refined, and triple refined, must be admired by everybody, but by me with that sort of calm, sober, chastened admiration which one is in the habit of bestowing on those sort of poems which are very short and seem very long.

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD. *Letters and Life*.

HAZLITT ON ROGERS

A very lady-like poet.

MR. HAZLITT proceeded to speak of the living poets. He began with Mr. Rogers, whom he described as a very lady-like poet—as an elegant but feeble writer, who wraps up obvious thoughts in a cover of fine words—who is full of enigmas with no meaning in them. His poetry is a more minute and inoffensive species of the Della Cruscan. There is nothing like truth of nature, or simplicity of expression. You cannot see

the thought for the ambiguity of the expression—the figure for the finery—the picture for the varnish. As an example of this, Mr. H. referred to the description of a friend's ice-house,¹ in which Mr. Rogers has carried the principle of elegant evasion and delicate insinuation of his meaning so far, that the Monthly Reviewers mistook his friend's ice-house for a dog-kennel, and the monster which was emphatically said to be chained up in it for a large mastiff dog.

HAZLITT. *Lectures on English Poetry.*

CHARLES LAMB ON ROGERS

Rogers had sent an early copy of his "Poems", with the Turner and Stothard illustrations, to Lamb, who replied with this sonnet, appearing in The Times of December 13, 1833.

To Samuel Rogers, Esq., on the new Edition of his "Pleasures of Memory."

When thy gay book hath paid its proud devoirs,
 Poetic friend, and fed with luxury
 The eye of pampered aristocracy
 In glittering drawing-rooms and gilt boudoirs,
 O'erlaid with comments of pictorial art
 However rich or rare, yet nothing leaving
 Of healthful action to the soul-conceiving
 Of the true reader—yet a nobler part
 Awaits thy work, already classic styled.
 Cheap-clad, accessible, in homeliest show
 The modest beauty thro' the land shall go
 From year to year, and render life more mild;
 Refinement to the poor man's hearth shall give
 And in the moral heart of England live.

CHARLES LAMB. *Letters (Ainger's ed. note to Vol. II, p. 374).*

¹ In his *Epistle to a Friend*. The lines are—

But hence away! yon rocky cave forbear!
 A sullen captive broods in silence there.
 There though the dog-star flame, condemn'd to dwell,
 In the dark centre of its inmost cell,
 Wild winter ministers his dread control,
 To cool and crystallize the nectar'd bowl!
 His faded form an awful grace retains;
 Stern though subdued, majestic yet in chains!

CARLYLE ON ROGERS

To Emerson, Nov. 15, 1838.

OLD Rogers with his pale head, white, bare, and cold as snow, will work on you with those large blue eyes, cruel, sorrowful, and that sardonic shelf-chin.

CARLYLE AND EMERSON. *Correspondence.*

Carlyle finds Samuel Rogers at the Ashburtons, during a fortnight's stay in the shooting season.

OLD Rogers stayed the longest, indeed as long as ourselves. I do not remember any old man (he is now eighty-three) whose manner of living gave me less satisfaction. A most sorrowful, distressing, distracted old phenomenon, hovering over the rim of deep eternities with nothing but light babble, fatuity, vanity, and the frostiest London wit in his mouth. Sometimes I felt as if I could throttle him, the poor old wretch! but then suddenly I reflected 'it is but for two days more.'

FROUDE. *Carlyle's Life in London.*

S. C. HALL¹ ON ROGERS

Mr. S. C. Hall dislikes Samuel Rogers.

you could not fancy, when you looked upon him, that you saw a good man. It was a repulsive countenance; to say it was ugly would be to pay it a compliment, and I verily believe it was indicative of a naturally shrivelled heart and contracted soul. . . . With enormous power to do good, how did Rogers use it? If he lent—and it was seldom he did—to a distressed brother of the pen, he required the return of the loan with interest—when it could be had; if he gave, it was grudgingly and with a shrug. He was prudence personified; some one

¹ Samuel Carter Hall, whose *Retrospect of a Long Life* is often quoted here, was born in 1800 and died in 1889. He became associated with Colburn the publisher, and edited "The New Monthly Magazine", and finally he became editor and then proprietor of "The Art Union Monthly", which caused a great sensation by exposing the business of faking old masters, so that for some years art prices were in a state of chaos. Hall had a very large acquaintance among the literary and bohemian figures of the period.

said of him, "I am sure that as a baby he never fell down unless he was pushed, but walked from chair to chair in the drawing-room, steadily and quietly, till he reached a place where the sunbeams fell on the carpet."

He himself records that, when Madame de Staël once said to him, "How very sorry I am for Campbell! his poverty so unsettles his mind that he cannot write," his reply was, "Why does he not take the situation of a clerk? He could then compose verses during his leisure hours." In this cold, unsympathizing fashion the author of "*The Pleasures of Memory*" continued to look on the troubles of others to the last.

S. C. HALL. *Retrospect of a Long Life.*

HARRIET MARTINEAU ON ROGERS

The good and the bad of Samuel Rogers.

... HE was always substantially helping poor poets. Besides the innumerable instances, known only to his intimates, of the attention he bestowed, as well as the money, in the case of poetical basket-makers, poetical footmen, and other such hopeless sons of the Muse, his deeds of munificence towards men of genius were too great to be concealed. His aids to Moore have been recently made known by the publication of Moore's *Diaries*. It was Rogers who secured to Crabbe the 3000*l.* from Murray, which were in jeopardy before. He advanced 500*l.* to Campbell to purchase a share of the *Metropolitan Magazine*, and refused security. And he gave thought, took trouble, used influence, and adventured advice. This was the conduct and the method of the last of the Patrons of Literature in England.

All honour to him for this! But not the less must the drawbacks be brought into the account. In recording the last of any social phase, it is dishonest to present the bright parts without the shadows; and Rogers's remarkable position was due almost as much to his faults as to his virtues. He was, plainly speaking, at once a flatterer and a cynic. It was impossible for those who knew him best to say, at any moment, whether he was in earnest or covert jest. Whether he ever was in earnest, there is no sort of evidence but his acts; and the consequence was that his flattery went for nothing, except with novices, while his causticity bit as deep as he intended. He would begin with a

series of outrageous compliments, in a measured style which forbade interruption; and, if he was allowed to finish, would go away and boast how much he had made a victim swallow. He would accept a constant seat at a great man's table, flatter his host to the top of his bent, and then, as is upon record, go away and say that the company there was got up by conscription—that there were two parties before whom everybody must appear, his host and the police. Where it was safe, he would try his sarcasms on the victims themselves. A multitude of his sayings are rankling in people's memories which could not possibly have had any other origin than the love of giving pain. Some were so atrocious as to suggest the idea that he had a sort of physiological curiosity to see how people could bear such inflictions. Those who could bear them, and especially those who despised them, stood well with him. In that case, there was something more like reality in the tone of his subsequent intercourse than in ordinary cases. The relation which this propensity of his bore to his position was direct. It placed him at great men's tables and kept him there, more than any other of his qualifications. His poetry alone would not have done it. His love and knowledge of Art would not have done it; and much less his wealth. His causticity was his pass-key everywhere. Except the worship paid to the Railway King for his wealth, we know of nothing in modern society so extraordinary and humiliating as the deference paid to Rogers for his ill-nature. It became a sort of public apprehension, increasing with his years, till it ceased to be disgraceful in the eyes of the coteries, and the flatterer was flattered, and the backbiter was propitiated, almost without disguise or shame, on account of his bitter wit. . . .

HARRIET MARTINEAU. *Biographical Sketches.*

THOMAS MOORE

1779-1852



THE AUTHOR OF "LALLA ROOKH".

THOMAS MOORE

1779-1852

THOMAS MOORE was not of lofty lineage. His father, John Moore, was a Dublin grocer and wine merchant: his mother was a Miss Anastasia Codd. In 1794 he was admitted to Trinity College, Dublin, where he made friends with Robert Emmet, and narrowly escaped being drawn into his abortive rebellion. In place of the scaffold he left for England to eat his dinners at the Middle Temple, and to become a great social success. His *Odes of Anacreon* (translated) were issued in 1800, with a dedication to the Prince of Wales, and a long list of distinguished subscribers: the next year his juvenile poems appeared anonymously, as "The Poetical Works of the late Thomas Little, Esq." In 1806 came out his "Epistles, Odes, and Other Poems," which Jeffrey attacked in the *Edinburgh Review*, and the duel at Chalk Farm followed, interrupted by "Bow Street myrmidons;" of which Byron wrote—

But Caledonia's goddess hovered o'er
The field, and saved him from the wrath of Moore;
From either pistol snatched the vengeful lead,
And straight restored it to her favourite's head.

And again—

Can none remember that eventful day,
That ever glorious, almost fatal fray,
When Little's leadless pistol met his eye,
And Bow-street myrmidons stood laughing by?

Moore's own account of this incident is given in his "Diary." Moore had borrowed his pistols from Mr. W. E. Spencer, who took the precaution of sending the Bow-street officers to prevent the consequences becoming too serious.

"We, of course, had bowed to each other at meeting; but the first words I recollect to have passed between us was Jeffrey's saying, on our being left together, 'What a beautiful

morning it is!'—'Yes,' I answered, with a slight smile; 'a morning made for better purposes:' to which his only response was a sort of assenting sigh. As our assistants were not, any more than ourselves, very expert at warlike matters, they were rather slow at their proceedings; and as Jeffrey and I walked up and down together, we came once in sight of their preparations; upon which I related to him, as rather *à propos* to the purpose, that Billy Egan, the Irish barrister, once said, when, as he was sauntering about in like manner while the pistols were loading, his antagonist, a fiery little fellow, called out to him angrily to keep his ground, 'Don't make yourself unaisy, my dear fellow,' said Egan, 'sure, isn't it bad enough to take the dose, without being by at the mixing up?' Jeffrey had scarcely time to smile at this story, when our two friends, issuing from behind the trees, placed us at our respective posts (the distance, I suppose, having been previously measured by them), and put the pistols into our hands. They then retired to a little distance; the pistols were on both sides raised, and we waited but the signal to fire, when some police-officers, whose approach none of us had noticed, and who were within a second of being too late, rushed out from a hedge behind Jeffrey, and one of them, striking at Jeffrey's pistol with his staff, knocked it to some distance into the field, while another, running over to me, took possession also of mine. We were then replaced in our respective carriages, and conveyed crestfallen to Bow-street."

It is pleasant to be able to record that Moore and Jeffrey afterwards became cordial friends. It is the case, I believe, that Jeffrey's pistol was found to be unloaded at the inquiry: hence Byron's sarcasms.

Moore began his "Irish Melodies" in 1808. Some four years later he turned to political rhyming, and lampooned the Prince Regent, once his patron. About the same time he began "Lalla Rookh", having "read himself into familiarity" with Eastern scenery at Lord Moira's library in Donington Park. This poem was the result of a contract with Longmans, the publishers engaging to pay three thousand guineas for a metrical romance on an Eastern subject, containing at least as many lines as Scott's "Rokeby." Moore was a slow worker, and the

appearance of Byron's "The Giaour" nearly decided him to seek another subject. "Lalla Rookh" did not actually appear until 1817. Its success was immediate; but financial trouble forced Moore to retire to the Continent, where he visited Byron in Italy, and received from him the first part of his "Memoirs", subsequently burned after Murray had been induced to surrender his rights in their publication.

Moore himself said that Music was the only art for which he was born with a real, natural love: his poetry, such as it was, sprang from his deep feeling for music. This was probably true enough. The sham Orientalism of his "Lalla Rookh" and "Loves of the Angels" is discredited; but there is a lyric quality in some of the "Irish Melodies" that still keeps them alive. He became a drawing-room pet, a sort of "boudoir Burns." It surprises us now to discover that, in his own day, he was regarded as a real, even as a great, poet. But so he was.

JEFFREY ON MOORE

On the Morals of Thomas Moore.

These extracts are from Jeffrey's review of "Epistles, Odes, and Other Poems", which led to the famous duel. The writer, while admitting that his singular sweetness and melody of versification might have raised Mr. Moore to an innocent distinction among the "occasional poets" of his day, regarded this book as a public nuisance, which he would willingly trample down "by one short movement of contempt and indignation," had he not reason to apprehend that it was abetted by—certain rather important people.

... THE immorality of Mr. Moore is infinitely more insidious and malignant. It seems to be his aim to impose corruption upon his readers, by concealing it under the mask of refinement; to reconcile them imperceptibly to the most vile and vulgar sensuality, by blending its language with that of exalted feeling and tender emotion; and to steal impurity into their hearts, by gently perverting the most simple and generous of their affections. In the execution of this unworthy task, he labours with a perseverance at once ludicrous and detestable. He may be seen in every page running round the paltry circle of his seductions with incredible zeal and anxiety, and stimu-

lating his jaded fancy for new images of impurity, with as much melancholy industry as ever outcast of the muses hunted for epithets or metre.

Edinburgh Review, July, 1806.

BYRON ON MOORE

Byron dedicated his "Corsair" to Thomas Moore, in the rather flamboyant style proper to his age. Moore, in his letters, after quoting some of the phrases, says, "Is not this very fine? They may say the praise is laid on with a trowel, but at least it is a golden trowel that lays it on." These are some of the words he quotes:

MY dear Moore, I dedicate to you the last production with which I shall trespass on public patience, and your indulgence, for some years; and I own that I feel anxious to avail myself of this latest and only opportunity of adorning my pages with a name, consecrated by unshaken public principle, and the most undoubted and various talents. While Ireland ranks you among the firmest of her patriots; while you stand alone the first of her bards in her estimation, and Britain repeats and ratifies the decree, permit one, whose only regret, since our first acquaintance, has been the years he had lost before it commenced, to add the humble but sincere suffrage of friendship to the voice of more than one nation. It will at least prove to you, that I have neither forgotten the gratification derived from your society, nor abandoned the prospect of its renewal, whenever your leisure or inclination allows you to atone to your friends for too long an absence. It is said among those friends, I trust truly, that you are engaged in the composition of a poem whose scene will be laid in the East; none can do those scenes so much justice. The wrongs of your own country, the magnificent and fiery spirit of her sons, the beauty and feeling of her daughters, may there be found; and Collins, when he denominated his Oriental his Irish Eclogues, was not aware how true, at least, was a part of his parallel. Your imagination will create a warmer sun, and less clouded sky; but wildness, tenderness, and originality, are part of your national claim of oriental descent, to which you have already thus far proved your title more clearly than the most zealous of your country's antiquarians.

After a digression on Himself, the scope and metre of his work, and a reference to those critics who persist in accusing him of drawing his heroes from his own person, he concludes:

IF, however, it were worth while to remove the impression, it might be of some service to me, that the man who is alike the delight of his readers and his friends, the poet of all circles, and the idol of his own, permits me here and elsewhere to subscribe myself,

Most truly,
And affectionately,
His obedient servant,

January 2, 1814.

BYRON.

Byron's first opinion of "Lalla Rookh," given in a letter to John Murray.

I HAVE read 'Lalla Rookh,' but not with sufficient attention yet, for I ride about, and lounge, and ponder, and—two or three other things; so that my reading is very desultory, and not so attentive as it used to be. I am very glad to hear of its popularity, for Moore is a very noble fellow in all respects, and will enjoy it without any bad feelings which success—good or evil—sometimes engenders in the men of rhyme. Of the poem itself, I will tell you my opinion when I have mastered it: I say of the poem, for I don't like the prose at all—at all; in the meantime, the 'fire-Worshippers' is the best, and the 'Veiled Prophet' the worst, of the volume.

BYRON. *Letters.*

In a letter to Moore himself. Dated Oct. 14, 1814.

YOUR long-delayed and expected work—I suppose you will take fright at 'The Lord of the Isles' and Scott now. You must do as you like, I have said my say. You ought to fear comparison with none, and any one would stare, who heard you were so tremulous,—though, after all, I believe it is the surest sign of talent. . . .

Ibid.

In this letter, to Murray, Byron delivers his opinion on modern poetry in general. He has been discussing Tom Moore, with reference especially to "Lalla Rookh."

WITH regard to poetry in general, I am convinced, the more I think of it, that he and *all* of us—Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, Moore, Campbell, I—are all in the wrong, one as much as another; that we are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system, or systems, not worth a damn in itself, and from which none but Rogers and Crabbe are free; and that the present and next generations will finally be of this opinion. I am the more confirmed in this by having lately gone over some of our classics, particularly Pope, whom I tried in this way: I took Moore's poems and my own and some others, and went over them side by side with Pope's, and I was really astonished (I ought not to have been so) and mortified at the ineffable distance in point of sense, harmony, effect, and even *imagination*, passion, and *invention*, between the little Queen Anne's man and us of the Lower Empire. Depend upon it, it is all Horace then, and Claudian now, among us; and if I had to begin again, I would mould myself accordingly. Crabbe's the man, but he has got a coarse and impracticable subject; and Rogers is retired upon half-pay, and has done enough, unless he were to do as he did formerly.

BYRON. *Letters* (dated Sept. 15, 1817).

COLERIDGE ON MOORE

Coleridge and "Lalla Rookh." A letter to Crabb Robinson, dated June, 1817.

I HAVE read two pages of "Lalla Rookh," or whatever it is called. Merciful Heaven! I dare read no more, that I may be able to answer at once to any questions, "I have but just looked at the work." O Robinson! If I could, or if I dared, act and feel as Moore and his set do, what havoc could I not make among their crockery-ware! Why, there are not three lines together without some adulteration of common English, and the ever-recurring blunder of using the possessive case, "*compassion's tears*," etc., for the preposition "of"—a blunder of which I have found no instances earlier than Dryden's slovenly verses written for the trade. . . .

S. T. COLERIDGE. *Letters.*

LEIGH HUNT ON MOORE

Moore introduced Leigh Hunt to Byron, but some difficulties arose between the two when Hunt went to Italy, and the proposal for a joint publication was brought forward.

MOORE's forehead was bony and full of character, with "bumps" of wit, large and radiant enough to transport a phrenologist. Sterne had such another. His eyes were as dark and fine as you would wish to see under a set of vine-leaves; his mouth generous and good humoured, with dimples; and his manner as bright as his talk, full of the wish to please and to be pleased. He sang, and played with great taste on the pianoforte, as might be supposed from his musical compositions. His voice, which was a little hoarse in speaking (at least I used to think so), softened into a breath, like that of the flute, when singing. In speaking, he was emphatic in rolling the letter *r*, perhaps out of a despair of being able to get rid of the national peculiarity. The structure of his versification, when I first knew him, was more artificial than it was afterwards; and in his serious compositions it suited him better. He had hardly faith enough in the sentiments of which he treated to give way to his impulses in writing, except when they were festive and witty; and artificial thoughts demand a similar embodiment. Both patriotism and personal experience, however, occasionally inspired him with lyric pathos; and in his naturally musical perception of the right principles of versification, he contemplated the fine, easy-playing muscular style of Dryden, with a sort of perilous pleasure. I remember his quoting with delight a couplet of Dryden's, which came with a particular grace from his lips:

"Let honour and preferment go for gold;
But glorious beauty isn't to be sold."

LEIGH HUNT. *Autobiography.*

Leigh Hunt writes to Moore about "Lalla Rookh."

I HOPE that you are setting about something fresh, and that now you have got all the experiences of your poetry, you will give us some story or other poem by itself. 'Lalla Rookh,' to be sincere with you, appeared to me to be too florid in its

general style; but there are exquisite passages, and you have so truly a poetical character of your own—you are so truly, by birth, a poetical animal, out of the pale of book-associations, and a free inhabitant of the most Elysian parts of nature—that the more you resolved to speak and to feel out of the sincerity of your own impulses, without thinking it necessary to search for ideas, the more to your advantage, I am persuaded, it would be. You are a born poet, and have only to claim your inheritance—not to be heaping up a multitude of anxious proofs, which, though mistaken by some for ostentation, are in reality evidences of a *diffidence* of pretension, which you ought not to feel. On the other hand, I would not see you restrained so much as I formerly would have done in certain amatory respects; nor, indeed, are you so, perhaps, notwithstanding one of the morals of your book, in which, I think, you overshot the mark in making repentance a better thing than the wish to make amends. Repentance is undoubtedly a very good and delicate thing in some minds, and should reasonably make the amends when they are not to be made otherwise; but, generally speaking, it is mere regret for the loss of something on one's own part, not a social and just feeling; it is as much as to say—I'm very sorry I missed the plum-cake I might have had. The world, I think, does not want repentance, especially for the more kindly errors; it wants kindness itself, *unselfishness*, justice, imagination, good taste, love and friendship—all that leads it to think of one another,—in short, gain for all, as opposed to gain for the individual. Now to produce this, I would see even some abuses hazarded on the gentler side of things, especially as some of the abuses themselves arise out of a gross and selfish misconception of guilt and innocence, and of forms for essentials; so that the most kindly and virtuous natures are repeatedly sacrificed, either to the most painful and unnatural self-denial, or to the gratuitous wretchedness of imaginary guilt—or, worse than all, are turned cold-blooded and worldly, out of a false notion of their own natural self-defence. I would have no insincerity, no such thing as seduction, no gross selfishness of any sort; I would only have the world think as *well* as they can of all the gentler impulses, and as *badly* as they can of all the violent, the proud, and the exclusive ones: but as the majority go on at present (though

somewhat shaken by philosophy) they proceed upon the blessed absurdity of *making* as much guilt as they can out of the former, and surrounding the latter with all sorts of 'pride, pomp, and circumstance.' But you will take me for one of your old friends the Fathers if I go on at this rate. . . .

THOMAS MOORE. *Memoirs, etc.*

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE ON MOORE

Extracts from a Review of "Lalla Rookh. An Oriental Romance."
By Thomas Moore. 4to, London, Longman and Co., 1817.

MR. MOORE is, beyond all comparison, the most ingenious, brilliant, and fanciful Poet of the present age. His external senses seem more delicate and acute than those of other men; and thus perceptions and sensations crowd in upon him from every quarter, apparently independent of volition, and with all the vehemence and vivacity of instinct. . . . Feeling and Fancy therefore are the distinguishing attributes of his poetical character; yet he is far from being unendowed with loftier qualities, and he occasionally exhibits a strength of Intellect, and a power of Imagination, which raise him above that class of writers to which he might otherwise seem to belong, and place him triumphantly by the side of our greatest Poets.

With this warmth of temperament, exceeding even the ordinary vivacity of the Irish national character, and with a fancy so lively and volatile, it behoved Mr. Moore, when first starting as a poet in early life, to be cautious in the choice both of his models and his subjects. In both he was most unfortunate; and every lover of virtue must lament, that while his first productions sometimes breathe and glow with genuine feeling and passion, and often exhibit harmless and amusing flights of capricious fancy, they are so fatally infected with a spirit to which we can give no other name than licentiousness, and which is incompatible with that elevation and dignity of moral sentiment essential to the very existence of real poetry.

But though he was thus early led astray, he soon began to feel how mean and how unworthy were even the highest triumphs won in such a field, and to pant for nobler achievements. . . . The errors and aberrations of his youthful genius seemed forgotten by his soul, as it continued to advance

through a nobler and purer region; and it is long since Mr. Moore has redeemed himself—nobly redeemed himself, and become the eloquent and inspired champion of virtue, liberty, and truth.

Purely and intensely Asiatic.

ENTERTAINING the opinion which we have now imperfectly expressed of Mr. Moore's poetical character, we opened *Lalla Rookh* with confident expectations of finding beauty in every page; and we have not been disappointed. He has, by accurate and extensive reading, imbued his mind with so familiar a knowledge of eastern scenery—that we feel as if we were reading the poetry of one of the children of the Sun. No European image ever breaks or steals in to destroy the illusion—every tone, and hue, and form, is purely and intensely Asiatic—and the language, faces, forms, dresses, mien, sentiments, passions, actions, and characters of the different agents, are all congenial with the flowery earth they inhabit, and the burning sky that glows over their heads.

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. June, 1817.

EDGAR ALLAN POE ON MOORE

Reviewing Moore's "Alciphron," Poe takes occasion to speak of Fancy and Imagination.

A NEW poem from Moore calls to mind that critical opinion respecting him which had its origin, we believe, in the dogmatism of Coleridge—we mean the opinion that he is essentially the poet of *fancy*—the term being employed in contradistinction to *imagination*. “The fancy,” says the author of the “Ancient Mariner,” in his “Biographia Literaria,” “the fancy combines, the imagination creates.” And this was intended, and has been received, as a distinction. If so at all, it is one without a difference; without even a difference of *degree*. The fancy as nearly creates as the imagination, and neither creates in any respect. All novel conceptions are merely unusual combinations. The mind of man can *imagine* nothing which has not really existed; and this point is susceptible of the most positive demonstration—see the Baron de Bielfeld, in his “*Premiers Traits de l'Erudition Universelle*, 1767.” It will be said, perhaps, that we can

imagine a *griffin*, and that a griffin does not exist. Not the griffin certainly, but its component parts. It is a mere compendium of known limbs and features—of known qualities.

Poe's opinion of Moore in general.

WHILE Moore does not reach, except in rare snatches, the height of the loftiest qualities of some whom we have named, yet he has written finer poems than any, of equal length, by the greatest of his rivals. His radiance, not always as bright as some flashes from other pens, is yet a radiance of equable glow, whose total amount of light exceeds, by very much, we think, that total amount in the case of any contemporary writer whatsoever. A vivid fancy, an epigrammatic spirit, a fine taste, vivacity, dexterity, and a musical ear, have made him very easily what he is, the most popular poet now living—if not the most popular poet that ever lived—and, perhaps, a slight modification at birth of that which phrenologists have agreed to term *temperament* might have made him the truest and noblest votary of the muse of any age or clime. As it is, we have only casual glimpses of that *mens divinior* which is assuredly enshrined within him.

EDGAR ALLAN POE. *Criticisms.*

HAZLITT ON MOORE

Tom Moore as Ariel.

MR. MOORE's muse was compared to Ariel,—as light, as tricksy, as indefatigable, and as humane a spirit. His fancy is ever on the wing; it flutters in the gale, glitters in the sun. Every thing lives, moves, and sparkles in his poetry; and over all love waves his purple wings. His thoughts are as many, as restless, and as bright, as the insects that people the sun's beam. The fault of Moore is an exuberance of involuntary power. His levity becomes oppressive. He exhausts attention by being inexhaustible. . . . His gay, laughing style, which relates to the immediate pleasures of love and wine, is better than his sentimental and romantic view; for this pathos sometimes melts into a mawkish sensibility, or crystallizes into all the prettinesses of allegorical language, or hardness of external imagery. He has wit at will, and of the best quality. His satirical and burlesque poetry is his best. Mr. Moore ought not to have

written *Lalla Rookh*, even for three thousand guineas, said Mr. Hazlitt. His fame was worth more than that. He should have minded the advice of Fadladeen.¹ It is not, however, a failure, so much as an evasion of public opinion, and a consequent disappointment.

HAZLITT'S *Lectures on English Poetry*.

MARY HOWITT ON MOORE

Mary Howitt recalls the literary glories of the past, in a letter to her sister Anna.

NOTTINGHAM,
Dec. 26, 1830.

... AND dost thou remember our first reading of 'Lalla Rookh?' It was on a washing-day. We read and clapped our clear-starching, read and clapped, read and clapped and read again, and all the time our souls were not on this earth. Ay, dear Anna, it was either being young or being unsurfeited which gave such glory to poetry in those days. And yet I do question whether, if 'Lalla Rookh' were now first published, I could enjoy it as I did then. But of this I cannot judge; the idea of the poem is spoiled to me by others being like it. I long for an era, the outbreaking of some strong spirit who would open another seal. . . .

MARY HOWITT. *An Autobiography*.

N. P. WILLIS ON MOORE

N. P. Willis, an American author of some note in his day (1806-1867), came to Europe in 1831 as correspondent and foreign editor of the New York Mirror, to which he contributed a series of letters, afterwards published under the title "Pencillings by the Way." In these he gave his impressions of the many literary personalities whom he chanced to meet. Here is a sketch of his meeting with Moore, which took place in June, 1834.

I CALLED on Moore with a letter of introduction, and met him at the door of his lodgings. I knew him instantly from the

¹ The "critical and fastidious Fadladeen," it may be necessary to explain, was the Great Nazir or Chamberlain of the Haram—a "judge of everything . . . from the mixture of a conserve of rose-leaves to the composition of an epic poem."

pictures I had seen of him, but was surprised at the diminutiveness of his person. He is much below the middle size, and with his white hat, and long chocolate frock coat, was far from prepossessing in his appearance. With this material disadvantage, however, his address is gentlemanlike to a very marked degree, and I should think no one could see Moore, without conceiving a strong liking for him. . . .

He dined with him that night at Lady Blessington's, and gives an amusing account of the dinner.

"MR. MOORE," cried the footman, at the bottom of the staircase; "Mr. Moore," cried the footman at the top; and with his glass at his eye, stumbling over an ottoman between his near-sightedness and the darkness of the room, enters the poet. Half a glance tells you he is at home on the carpet. Sliding his little feet up to Lady Blessington, he made his compliments with a gaiety and an ease combined with a kind of worshipping deference that was worthy of a prime minister at the court of love. With the gentlemen, all of whom he knew, he had a frank, merry manner of a confident favourite, and he was greeted like one. He went from one to the other, straining back his head to look at them (for, singularly enough, every gentleman in the room was six feet high and upwards), and to every one he said something which, from any one else, would have seemed peculiarly felicitous, but which fell from his lips as if his breath was not more spontaneous.

Nothing but a short-hand report could retain the delicacy and elegance of Moore's language, and memory itself cannot embody again the kind of frost-work of imagery which was formed and melted on his lips. His voice is soft or firm as the subject requires, but, perhaps, the word *gentlemanly* describes it better than any other. It is upon a natural key, but, if I may so phrase it, is *fused* with a high-bred affectation, expressing deference and courtesy, at the same time that its pauses are constructed peculiarly to catch the ear. It would be difficult not to attend to him while he is talking, though the subject were but the shape of a wine-glass. Moore's head is distinctly before me while I write, but I shall find it difficult to describe. His hair, which curled once all over it in long tendrils, unlike anybody else's in the world, and which, probably, suggested

his soubriquet of "*Bacchus*," is diminished now to a few curls sprinkled with grey, and scattered in a single ring above his ears. His forehead is wrinkled, with the exception of a most prominent development of the organ of gaiety, which, singularly enough, shines with the lustre and smooth polish of a pearl, and is surrounded by a semicircle of lines drawn close about it, like intrenchments against Time. His eyes still sparkle like a champagne bubble, though the invader has drawn his pencillings about the corners; and there is a kind of wintry red, of the tinge of an October leaf, that seems enamelled on his cheek, the eloquent record of the claret his wit has brightened. His mouth is the most characteristic feature of all. The lips are delicately cut, slight and changeable as an aspen; but there is a set-up look about the lower lip—a determination of the muscle to a particular expression, and you fancy that you can almost see wit astride upon it. It is written legibly with the imprint of habitual success. It is arch, confident, and half diffident, as if he was disguising his pleasure at applause, while another bright gleam of fancy was breaking on him. The slightly-tossed nose confirms the fun of the expression, and altogether it is a face that sparkles, beams, radiates.

. . . My letter is getting long, and I have no time to describe his singing. It is well known, however, that its effect is only equalled by the beauty of his own words; and, for one, I could have taken him into my heart with delight. He makes no attempt at music. It is a kind of admirable recitative, in which every shade of thought is syllabled and dwelt upon, and the sentiment of the song goes through your blood, warming you to the very eyelids, and starting your tears, if you have a soul or sense in you. I have heard of a woman fainting at a song of Moore's; and if the burden of it answered by chance to a secret in the bosom of the listener, I should think from its comparative effect upon so old a stager as myself, that the heart would break with it. . . .

N. P. WILLIS. *Pencillings by the Way.*

SHELLEY ON MOORE

Mrs. Shelley protests that Shelley admired Moore's works. Extract from the diary dated Jan. 19th, 1839.

RECEIVED a letter one of these days from Mrs. Shelley, who is about to publish an edition of Shelley's works, asking me whether I had a copy of his "Queen,"—that as originally printed for private circulation; as she could not procure one, and took for granted that I must have been one of those persons to whom he presented copies. In answering that I was unluckily not one of them, I added, in a laughing way, that I had never been much in repute with certain great guns of Parnassus, such as Wordsworth, Southey, her own Shelley, &c. Received from her, in consequence, a very kind and flattering reply, in which she says, "I cannot help writing one word to say how mistaken you are. Shelley was too true a poet not to feel your unrivalled merits, especially in the department of poetry peculiarly your own,—songs and short poems instinct with the intense principle of life and love. Such, your unspeakably beautiful poems to Nea; such, how many others! One of the first things I remember with Shelley was his repeating to me one of your gems with enthusiasm. In short, be assured that as genius is the best judge of genius, those poems of yours which you yourself would value most, were admired by none so much as Shelley. You know me far too well not to know I speak the exact truth."

THOMAS MOORE. *Memoirs, etc.*

B. W. PROCTER ("BARRY CORNWALL") ON MOORE

After relating how Moore cautioned Crabbe, who was engaged to dine that evening with him at a nobleman's house, to stand up and be manly, "Barry Cornwall" confesses to a poor opinion of Moore's poetry.

I COME now to Mr. Thomas Moore himself, whose writings I confess I never very greatly admired. They are very clever and polished, but to my taste terribly artificial. All that Burns had he wanted. I except a certain easy flow of words, the talent for producing which Moore had manifestly cultivated to the

extreme point of art. He was a very little round-faced man, and had an easily worn but not unpleasant assurance. His estimates of persons seemed to depend much on their position or rank; he did not trouble himself to discuss persons who had no rank at all.

In his diary or letters, published in Lord John Russell's memoir, he speaks of being present at two dinners, viz., at one where the company consisted of "some curious people" (I think that is the phrase), namely, Wordsworth, Lamb, Southey, etc., and at the other, where he met a "distinguished circle," consisting of Lord A., Lord B., Lord C., etc., all of whom are now duly forgotten. "Tommy loves a lord," as Lord Byron said of him. Moore's verses are for the most part overlaboured, I think, and have a tendency to the epigrammatic, where simplicity would have better served. . . . Speaking for myself, I would rather have written three of Burns's songs than the whole collection (of the Irish Melodies). Their vitality is preserved by the beautiful airs to which they are wedded.

B. W. PROCTER. *Recollections of Men of Letters.*

S. C. HALL ON MOORE

Tom Moore at sixty-five.

I RECALL him at this moment—his small form and intellectual face rich in expression, and that expression the sweetest, the most gentle, and the kindest. He had still in age the same bright and clear eye, the same gracious smile, the same suave and winning manner I had noticed as the attributes of what might in comparison be styled his youth, a forehead not remarkably broad or high, but singularly impressive, firm, and full with the organs of music and gaiety large, and those of benevolence and veneration greatly preponderating. The nose, as observed in all his portraits, was somewhat upturned. Standing or sitting, his head was invariably upraised, owing, perhaps, mainly to his shortness of stature. He had so much bodily activity as to give him the attribute of restlessness, and no doubt that usual accompaniment of genius was eminently a characteristic of his. His hair was, at the time I speak of, thin and very grey, and he wore his hat with the jaunty air that has often been remarked as a peculiarity of the Irish. In dress,

though far from slovenly, he was by no means precise. He had but little voice, yet he sang with a depth of sweetness that charmed all hearers; it was true melody, and told upon the heart as well as the ear. . . . It would be difficult to describe the effect of his singing. I remember Letitia Landon saying to me, it conveyed an idea of what a mermaid's song might be.

I repeat I never knew a better man than Moore in *all* the relations of life; the best of God's creatures may take him as a model without going wrong; and those who adopt literature as a profession can accept him as an example, in proof that genius may pass unscathed through seductions so perilous as to seem irresistible. . . .

A more devotedly attached, or more thoroughly faithful husband, the world has rarely known.

s. c. HALL. *Retrospect of a Long Life.*

R O B E R T S O U T H E Y

1774-1843

ROBERT SOUTHEY, successor to "Laureate Pye," entered Westminster School at the age of fourteen, but was requested to leave (as his friend Landor was at Rugby) by Dr. William Vincent, the ground of action being an essay against flogging which he had contributed to a school magazine. In 1792 he matriculated at Balliol, having been refused at Christ Church. His uncle, who had paid for his education, wished Southey to take Holy Orders, but he felt himself debarred from that profession by his Unitarian views. In 1794 he had met Coleridge, and been infected with dreams of a "pantisocracy" somewhat on the banks of the Susquehanna. Already, while an undergraduate, he had written his "Joan of Arc"—an epic poem, which Cottle, the generous Bristol bookseller, published in 1796, paying no less than £50 for the privilege.

Southey and Coleridge married sisters, and it was at Coleridge's invitation that the Southneys first visited the Lake district in 1801. Two years later, Southey took up his residence permanently at Greta Hall, Keswick, settling there with the Coleridges, and working hard at all sorts of literary endeavour in order to keep the household going. He filled more volumes with verse and prose than any other man of his generation; and the prose is now considered the better part. Even Byron, who did not love him, admired his prose. That storehouse of miscellaneous matter—"The Doctor"—has recently been republished.

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK ON SOUTHEY

On the Lake Poets—and some others.

... THOMSON and Cowper looked at the trees and hills which so many ingenious gentlemen had rhymed about so long without looking at them at all, and the effect of the operation on poetry was like the discovery of a new world. Painting shared the influence, and the principles of picturesque beauty were explored by adventurous essayists with indefatigable pertinacity. The

success which attended these experiments, and the pleasure which resulted from them, had the usual effect of all new enthusiasms, that of turning the heads of a few unfortunate persons, the patriarchs of the age of brass, who, mistaking the prominent novelty for the all-important totality, seem to have ratiocinated much in the following manner: "Poetical genius is the finest of all things, and we feel that we have more of it than any one ever had. The way to bring it to perfection is to cultivate poetical impressions exclusively. Poetical impressions can be received only among natural scenes; for all that is artificial is anti-poetical. Society is artificial, therefore we will live out of society. The mountains are natural, therefore we will live in the mountains. There we shall be shining models of purity and virtue, passing the whole day in the innocent and amiable occupation of going up and down hill, receiving poetical impressions, and communicating them in immortal verse to admiring generations." To some such perversion of intellect we owe that egregious confraternity of rhymesters, known by the name of the Lake Poets; who certainly did receive and communicate to the world some of the most extraordinary poetical impressions that ever were heard of, and ripened into models of public virtue, too splendid to need illustration. They wrote verses on a new principle; saw rocks and rivers in a new light; and remaining studiously ignorant of history, society, and human nature, cultivated the phantasy only at the expense of the memory and the reason; and contrived, though they had retreated from the world for the express purpose of seeing nature as she was, to see her only as she was not, converting the land they lived in into a sort of fairy-land, which they peopled with mysticisms and chimeras. This gave what is called a new tone to poetry, and conjured up a herd of desperate imitators, who have brought the age of brass prematurely to its dotage.

The so-called Return to Nature.

THE descriptive poetry of the present day has been called by its cultivators a *return to nature*. Nothing is more impertinent than this pretension. Poetry cannot travel out of the regions of its birth, the uncultivated lands of semi-civilized men. Mr. Wordsworth, the great leader of the returners to nature, cannot describe a scene under his own eyes without putting into it the

shadow of a Danish boy or the living ghost of Lucy Gray, or some similar phantastical parturition of the moods of his own mind.

In the origin and perfection of poetry, all the associations of life were composed of poetical materials. With us it is decidedly the reverse. We know too that there are no Dryads in Hyde-park nor Naiads in the Regent's-canal. But barbaric manners and supernatural interventions are essential to poetry. Either in the scene, or in the time, or in both, it must be remote from our ordinary perceptions. While the historian and the philosopher are advancing in, and accelerating, the progress of knowledge, the poet is wallowing in the rubbish of departed ignorance, and raking up the ashes of dead savages to find gewgaws and rattles for the grown babies of the age. Mr. Scott digs up the poachers and cattle-stealers of the ancient border. Lord Byron cruises for thieves and pirates on the shores of the Morea and among the Greek islands. Mr. Southey wades through ponderous volumes of travels and old chronicles, from which he carefully selects all that is false, useless, and absurd, as being essentially poetical; and when he has a commonplace book full of monstrosities, strings them into an epic. Mr. Wordsworth picks up village legends from old women and sextons; and Mr. Coleridge, to the valuable information acquired from similar sources, superadds the dreams of crazy theologians and the mysticisms of German metaphysics, and favours the world with visions in verse, in which the quadruple elements of sexton, old woman, Jeremy Taylor, and Emanuel Kant are harmonized into a delicious poetical compound. Mr. Moore presents us with a Persian, and Mr. Campbell with a Pennsylvanian tale, both formed on the same principle as Mr. Southey's epics, by extracting from a perfunctory and desultory perusal of a collection of voyages and travels, all that useful investigation would not seek for and that common sense would reject.

T. L. PEACOCK. *The Four Ages of Poetry.*

LEIGH HUNT ON SOUTHEY

It is interesting to compare Leigh Hunt on the Lake Poets with the preceding opinion.

IT was the Lake Poets in our opinion (however grudgingly we

say it, on some accounts) that were the first to revive a true taste for nature; and like most Revolutionists, especially of the cast which they have since turned out to be, they went to an extreme, calculated rather at first to make the readers of poetry disgusted with originality and adhere with contempt and resentment to their magazine common-places. This had a bad effect also in the way of re-action; and none of those writers have ever since been able to free themselves from certain stubborn affectations, which having been ignorantly confounded by others with the better part of them, have been retained by their self-love with a still less pardonable want of wisdom. The greater part indeed of the poetry of Mr. Southey, a weak man in all respects, is really made up of little else. Mr. Coleridge still trifles with his poetical as he has done with his metaphysical talent. Mr. Lamb, in our opinion, has a more real tact of humanity, a modester, Shakspearean wisdom, than any of them; and had he written more, might have delivered the school victoriously from all its defects. But it is Mr. Wordsworth who has advanced it the most, and who in spite of some morbidities as well as mistaken theories in other respects, has opened upon us a fund of thinking and imagination, that ranks him as the successor of the true and abundant poets of the older time.

LEIGH HUNT. *Examiner.*

DE QUINCEY ON SOUTHEY

De Quincey describes Southey's appearance.

SOUTHEY was, in person, somewhat taller than Wordsworth, being about five feet eleven in height, or a trifle more, whilst Wordsworth was about five feet ten; and, partly from having slender limbs, partly from being more symmetrically formed about the shoulders than Wordsworth, he struck one as a better and lighter figure, to the effect of which his dress contributed; for he wore pretty constantly a short jacket and pantaloons, and had much the air of a Tyrolese mountaineer.

Southey's feelings towards Wordsworth.

ON the next day arrived Wordsworth. I could read at once, in the manner of the two authors, that they were not on particularly

friendly, or rather, I should say, confidential terms. It seemed to me as if both had silently said—"We are too much men of sense to quarrel because we do not happen particularly to like each other's writings: we are neighbours, or what passes for such in the country. Let us show each other the courtesies which are becoming to men of letters; and, for any closer connexion, our distance of thirteen miles may be always sufficient to keep us from *that*." . . . At this period, Southey and Wordsworth entertained a mutual esteem, but did not cordially like each other. Indeed, it would have been odd if they had. Wordsworth lived in the open air: Southey in his library, which Coleridge used to call his wife. Southey had particularly elegant habits (Wordsworth called them *finical*) in the use of books. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was so negligent, and so self-indulgent in the same case, that, as Southey, laughing, expressed it to me some years afterwards, when I was staying at Greta Hall on a visit—"To introduce Wordsworth into one's library is like letting a bear into a tulip garden."

Hospitable but aloof.

RETURNING to Southey and Greta Hall, both the house and the master may deserve a few words more of description. For the master, I have already sketched his person; and his face I profess myself unable to describe accurately. His hair was black, and yet his complexion was fair; his eyes I believe to be hazel and large; but I will not vouch for that fact: his nose aquiline; and he has a remarkable habit of looking up into the air, as if looking at abstractions. The expression of his face was that of a very acute and aspiring man. So far, it was even noble, as it conveyed a feeling of a serene and gentle pride, habitually familiar with elevating subjects of contemplation. And yet it was impossible that this pride could have been offensive to anybody, chastened as it was by the most unaffected modesty; and this modesty made evident and prominent by the constant expression of reverence for the great men of the age (when he happened to esteem them such), and for all the great patriarchs of our literature. The point in which Southey's manner failed the most in conciliating regard was in all which related to the external expressions of friendliness. No man could be more sincerely hospitable—no man more essentially disposed to give

up even his time (the possession which he most valued) to the service of his friends. But there was an air of reserve and distance about him—the reserve of a lofty, self-respecting mind, but, perhaps, a little too freezing—in his treatment of all persons who were not among the *corps* of his ancient fireside friends. Still, even among the veriest strangers, it is but justice to notice his extreme courtesy in sacrificing his literary employments for the day, whatever they might be, to the duty (for such he made it) of doing the honours of the lake and the adjacent mountains.

His literary methods.

SOUTHEY was at this time (1807) and has continued ever since, the most industrious of all literary men on record. A certain task he prescribed to himself every morning before breakfast. This could not be a very long one, for he breakfasted at nine, or soon after, and *never* rose before eight, though he went to bed duly at half-past ten; but, as I have many times heard him say, less than nine hours' sleep he found insufficient. From breakfast to a latish dinner (about half after five or six) was his main period of literary toil. After dinner, according to the accident of having or not having visitors in the house, he sat over his wine, or he retired to his library again, from which, about eight, he was summoned to tea. But, generally speaking, he closed his literary toils at dinner; the whole of the hours after that being dedicated to his correspondence.

DE QUINCEY. *Literary Reminiscences.*

COLERIDGE ON SOUTHEY

Coleridge compares Crabbe with Southey.

I THINK Crabbe and Southey are something alike; but Crabbe's poems are founded on observation and real life—Southey's on fancy and books. In facility they are equal, though Crabbe's English is, of course, not upon a level with Southey's, which is next door to faultless. But in Crabbe there is an absolute defect of the high imagination; he gives me little or no pleasure; yet, no doubt, he has much power of a certain kind, and it is good to cultivate, even at some pains, a catholic taste in literature. I read

all sorts of books with some pleasure, except modern sermons and treatises on political economy.

COLERIDGE. *Table Talk.*

On the "Curse of Kehama."

WHEN we got on the subject of poetry and Southey, he gave us a critique of the Curse of Kehama, the fault of which he thought consisted in the association of a plot and a machinery so very wild with feelings so sober and tender: but he gave the poem high commendation, admired the art displayed in the employment of the Hindu monstrosities, and begged us to observe the noble feeling excited of the superiority of virtue over vice; that Kehama went on, from the beginning to the end of the poem, increasing in power, whilst Kailyal gradually lost her hopes and her protectors; and yet by the time we got to the end, we had arrived at an utter contempt and even carelessness of the power of evil, as exemplified in the almighty Rajah, and felt a complete confidence in the safety of the unprotected virtue of the maiden. This he thought the very great merit of the poem.

Recollections of Mr. Coleridge, from Table Talk.

SCOTT ON SOUTHEY

On the death of Henry James Pye, Poet Laureate from 1790-1813, the post was offered to Scott, who, fortified by a letter from the Duke of Buccleuch, refused the honour, hinting to Croker that Southey might accept it. The hint was taken, and Southey succeeded Pye.

ABBOTSFORD,
4th September, 1813.

MY DEAR SOUTHEY,

On my return here I found, to my no small surprise, a letter tendering me the laurel vacant by the death of the poetical Pye. I have declined the appointment, as being incompetent to the task of annual commemoration; but chiefly as being provided for in my professional department, and unwilling to incur the censure of engrossing the emolument attached to one of the few appointments which seems proper to be filled by a man of literature who has no other views in life. Will you forgive me, my dear friend, if I own I had you in my recollection. I

have given Croker the hint, and otherwise endeavoured to throw the office into your option. I am uncertain if you will like it, for the laurel has certainly been tarnished by some of its wearers, and as at present managed, its duties are inconvenient and somewhat liable to ridicule. . . .

LOCKHART. *Life of Scott.*

The following letter is interesting as giving the views of Sir Walter on the Ethics of Reviewing, as well as a candid opinion of Southey's "Curse of Kehama," which was the book submitted to him.

. . . I HAVE run up an attempt on the Curse of Kehama for the Quarterly; a strange thing it is—the Curse, I mean—and the critique is not, as the blackguards say, worth a damn; but what I could I did, which was to throw as much weight as possible upon the beautiful passages, of which there are many, and to slur over the absurdities, of which there are not a few. It is infinite pity of Southey, with genius almost to exuberance, so much learning and real good feeling of poetry, that, with the true obstinacy of a foolish papa, he will be most attached to the defects of his poetical offspring. This said Kehama affords cruel openings to the quizzers, and I suppose will get it roundly in the Edinburgh Review. I could have made a very different hand of it indeed, had the order of the day been *pour déchirer*.

LOCKHART. *Life of Scott.*

In a letter to Lord Byron, dated Nov. 6th, 1813, Scott takes occasion to give, among other things, his opinion of the new Laureate.

I HAVE not yet seen Southey in the Gazette as Laureate. He is a real poet, such as we read of in former times, with every atom of his soul and every moment of his time dedicated to literary pursuits, in which he differs from almost all those who have divided public attention with him. Your Lordship's habits of society, for example, and my own professional and official avocations, must necessarily connect us much more with our respective classes in the usual routine of pleasure or business, than if we had not any other employment than *vacare musis*. But Southey's ideas are all poetical, and his whole soul dedi-

cated to the pursuit of literature. In this respect, as well as in many others, he is a most striking and interesting character.

LOCKHART. *Life of Scott.*

BYRON ON SOUTHEY

Byron's first impressions of Southey were fairly favourable. From two letters to Tom Moore.

Sept. 27, 1813.

YESTERDAY, at Holland House, I was introduced to Southey—the best-looking bard I have seen for some time. To have that poet's head and shoulders, I would almost have written his Sapphics. He is certainly a prepossessing person to look on, and a man of talent, and all that, and—there is his eulogy.

Nov. 22, 1813.

SOUTHEY I have not seen much of. His appearance is *Epic*; and he is the only existing entire man of letters. All the others have some pursuit annexed to their authorship. His manners are mild, but not those of a man of the world, and his talents of the first order. His prose is perfect. Of his poetry there are various opinions: there is, perhaps, too much of it for the present generation;—posterity will probably select. He has *passages* equal to any thing. At present, he has a *party*, but no *public*—except for his prose writings. The life of Nelson is beautiful.

MOORE. *Life of Byron.*

Southey, in the preface to his "Vision of Judgement," takes occasion to say some harsh things on the "Satanic school" of poetry. Whereupon, in his preface to "The Vision of Judgment," by Quevedo Redivivus, Lord Byron has something to say by way of retort.

IT hath been wisely said, that "one fool makes many," and it hath been poetically observed—

"That fools rush in where angels fear to tread."—*Pope.*

If Mr. Southey had not rushed in where he had no business, and where he never was before, and never will be again, the following poem would not have been written. It is not impossible that it may be as good as his own, seeing that it cannot, by any species of stupidity, natural or acquired, be *worse*. The gross flattery, the dull impudence, the renegade intolerance,

and impious cant, of the poem by the author of "Wat Tyler," are something so stupendous as to form the sublime of himself —containing the quintessence of his own attributes.

So much for his poem—a word on his preface. In this preface it has pleased the magnanimous Laureate to draw the picture of a supposed "Satanic School," the which he doth recommend to the notice of the legislature; thereby adding to his other laurels the ambition of those of an informer. If there exists anywhere, except in his imagination, such a School, is he not sufficiently armed against it by his own intense vanity? The truth is, that there are certain writers whom Mr. S. imagines, like Scrub, to have "talked of *him*; for they laughed consumedly."

... With regard to the supernatural personages treated of, I can only say that I know as much about them, and (as an honest man) have a better right to talk of them, than Robert Southey. I have also treated them more tolerably. The way in which that poor insane creature, the Laureate, deals about his judgments in the next world, is like his own judgment in this. If it was not completely ludicrous, it would be something worse. I don't think that there is much more to say at present.

QUEVEDO REDIVIVUS.

As a postscript to the above is added.

MR. SOUTHEY being, as he says, a good Christian and vindictive, threatens, I understand, a reply to this our answer. It is to be hoped that his visionary faculties will in the mean time have acquired a little more judgment properly so called: otherwise he will get himself into new dilemmas. These apostate Jacobins furnish rich rejoinders. Let him take a specimen. Mr. Southey laudeth grievously "one Mr. Landor," who cultivates much private renown in the shape of Latin verses; and not long ago, the poet Laureate dedicated to him, it appeareth, one of his fugitive lyrics, upon the strength of a poem called "Gebir." Who could suppose, that in this same Gebir the aforesaid Savage Landor (for such is his grim cognomen) putteth into the infernal regions no less a person than the hero of his friend Mr. Southey's heaven,—yea, even George the Third!

BYRON. *Preface to "The Vision of Judgment."*

The feeling between Byron and Southey rose to such a pitch after the two "Visions of Judgment" that Byron wrote to Douglas Kinnaird, Feb. 6, 1822.

... WHAT remains to be done is to call him out. The question is, would he come? for, if he would not, the whole thing would appear ridiculous, if I were to take a long and expensive journey to no purpose.

... You must be my second, and, as such, I wish to consult you.

I apply to you, as one well versed in the duello or monomachie. . . .

MOORE. *Life of Byron.*

BLACKWOOD'S ON SOUTHEY

Southey is omitted.

The editor of Blackwood's appends the following mild rebuke as a footnote to the opening article—"On the Lake School of Poetry"—in the number of July, 1818.

WE cannot allow this article to pass through the press without regretting that the author of it has not thought proper to class Southey along with his three illustrious contemporaries. We have no doubt that he will yet do ample justice to his incomparable genius, and show to us that he has now omitted that great name, rather from the too excessive spirit of classification, than from any insensibility (which really in his mind we connot conceive) to the merits of that truly original Poet.

EDITOR.

LANDOR ON SOUTHEY

Landor had a great admiration for Robert Southey, who dedicated "Kehama" to him¹—and wrote to tell him (1839) of his approaching marriage to Miss Bowles. The following is Landor's comment.

SOUTHEY has written—he tells me of his intended marriage—that he has known the lady for twenty years—that there is a just proportion between their ages, and that, having but one daughter single, and being obliged to leave her frequently, she

¹ The best poem, and almost the best novel, of our days, were dedicated to me—"Kehama" by Southey and "Attila" by James!—Landor. *Private Letters.*

wants a friend and guide at home. Nothing is more reasonable, nothing more considerate and kind. Love has often made other wise men less wise, and sometimes other good men less good; but never Southey, the most perfect of mortals, at least of men mortals.

W. S. LANDOR. *Letters.*

“CHRISTOPHER NORTH”¹ ON SOUTHEY

To Hogg.

SOUTHEY’s ‘Roderic’ is not a first-rate work: the remorse of Roderic is that of a Christian devotee, rather than that of a dethroned monarch. His battles are ill fought. There is no processional march of events in the poem, no tendency to one great end, like a river increasing in majesty till it reaches the sea. Neither is there national character, Spanish or Moorish. No sublime imagery, no profound passion. Southey wrote it, and Southey is a man of talent; but it is his worst poem.

MRS. GORDON. “*Christopher North.*”

SAMUEL ROGERS ON SOUTHEY

Southey on a Visit.

IN all his domestic relations Southey was the most amiable of men; but he had no general philanthropy: he was what you call a *cold man*. He was never happy except when reading a book or making one. Coleridge once said to me, “I can’t think of Southey, without seeing him either mending or using a pen.” I spent some time with him at Lord Lonsdale’s, in company with Wordsworth and others; and while the rest of the party were walking about, talking, and amusing themselves, Southey preferred sitting solus in the library. “How *cold* he is!” was the exclamation of Wordsworth,—himself so joyous and communicative.

ROGERS. *Table-Talk.*

¹ “Christopher North” (“The Leopard”) of *Blackwood’s* associated with Lockhart (“The Scorpion”), in the attacks on the Cockney School, was John Wilson. 1785–1854.

POE ON SOUTHEY

Poe is puzzled by Southey's "Doctor."

THE "Doctor" has excited great attention in America as well as in England, and has given rise to every variety of conjecture and opinion, not only concerning the author's individuality, but in relation to the meaning, purpose, and character of the book itself. It is now said to be the work of one author—now of two, three, four, five—as far even as nine or ten. These writers are sometimes thought to have composed the "Doctor" conjointly—sometimes to have written each a portion. These individual portions have even been pointed out by the supremely acute, and the names of their respective fathers assigned. Supposed discrepancies of taste and manner, together with the prodigal introduction of mottoes, and other scraps of erudition (apparently beyond the compass of a single individual's reading) have given rise to this idea of a multiplicity of writers—among whom are mentioned in turn all the most witty, all the most eccentric, and especially all the most learned of Great Britain. Again—in regard to the nature of the book. It has been called an imitation of Sterne—an august and most profound exemplification, under the garb of eccentricity, of some all-important moral law—a true, under guise of a fictitious, biography—a simple *jeu d'esprit*—a mad farrago by a Bedlamite, and a great multiplicity of other equally fine names and hard. Undoubtedly, the best method of arriving at a decision in relation to a work of this nature, is to read it through with attention, and thus see what can be made of it. We have done so, and can make nothing of it, and are therefore clearly of opinion that the "Doctor" is precisely—nothing. We mean to say that is nothing better than a *hoax*.

That any serious truth is meant to be inculcated by a tissue of bizarre and disjointed rhapsodies, whose *general* meaning no person can fathom, is a notion altogether untenable, unless we suppose the author a madman. But there are none of the proper evidences of madness in the book—while of mere *banter* there are instances innumerable. One half, at least, of the entire publication is taken up with palpable quizzes, reasonings in a circle, sentences, like the nonsense verses of Du Bartas,

evidently framed to mean nothing, while wearing an air of profound thought, and grotesque speculations in regard to the probable excitement to be created by the book.

... The wit and humour of the "Doctor" have seldom been equalled. We cannot think Southey wrote it, but have no idea who did.

EDGAR ALLAN POE. *Marginalia.*

JOHN STUART MILL ON SOUTHEY

From a letter to John Sterling, dated October, 1831.

I ALSO saw a great deal of Southey, who is a very different kind of man, very inferior to Wordsworth in the higher powers of intellect, and entirely destitute of his philosophic spirit, but a remarkably pleasing and likeable man. I never could understand him till lately; that is, I never could reconcile the tone of such of his writings as I had read with what his friends said of him: I could only get rid of the notion of his being insincere by supposing him to be extremely fretful and irritable; but when I came to read his "Colloquies," in which he has put forth much more than in any other work, of the natural man, as distinguished from the writer aiming at a particular effect, I found there a kind of connecting link between the two parts of his character, and formed very much the same notion of him which I now have after seeing and conversing with him. He seems to me to be a man of gentle feelings and bitter opinions. His opinions make him think a great many things abominable which are not so; and against which, accordingly, he thinks it would be right and suitable to the fitness of things, to express great indignation; but if he really feels this indignation, it is only by a voluntary act of the imagination that he conjures it up, by representing the thing to his own mind in colours suited to that passion: now, when he knows the individual and feels disposed to like him, although that individual may be placed in one of the condemned categories, he does not conjure up this phantom and feels therefore no principle of repugnance, nor excites any.

J. S. MILL. *Letters.*

CARLYLE ON SOUTHEY

Note from Carlyle's Journal.

February 26, 1835.—Went last night, in wet bad weather, to Taylor's to meet Southey, who received me kindly. A lean, grey, whiteheaded man of dusky complexion, unexpectedly tall when he rises and still leaner then—the shallowest chin, prominent snubbed Roman nose, small carelined brow, huge bush of white-grey hair on high crown and projecting on all sides, the most vehement pair of faint hazel eyes I have ever seen—a well-read, honest, limited (strait-laced even) kindly hearted, most irritable man. We parted kindly, with no great purpose on either side, I imagine, to meet again. Southey believes in the Church of England. This is notable: notable and honourable that he has made such belief serve him so well.

FROUDE. *Carlyle's Life in London.*

At the close of Carlyle's "Reminiscences" there is an appendix, almost entirely concerned with recollections of Southey and Wordsworth, from which I take the following excerpts:

WHEN it was that I first got acquainted with Southey's books, I do not now recollect, except that it must have been several years after he had been familiar to me as a name, and many years after the public had been familiar with him as a poet, and otherwise didactic writer. . . . It must have been a year or two later when his 'Thalaba,' 'Curse of Kehama,' 'Joan of Arc,' etc., came into my hands. . . . I recollect the much kindlier and more respectful feeling these awoke in me, which has continued ever since. I much recognise the piety, the gentle deep affection, the reverence for God and man, which reigned in these pieces; full of soft pity, like the wailings of a mother, and yet with a clang of chivalrous valour finely audible too. One could not help loving such a man; and yet I rather felt too as if he were a shrillish thin kind of man, the feminine element perhaps considerably predominating and limiting. . . .

At Henry Taylor's.

SOUTHEY was a man towards well up in the fifties; hair grey, not yet hoary, well setting off his fine clear brown complexion;

head and face both smallish, as indeed the figure was while seated; features finely cut; eyes, brow, mouth, good in their kind—expressive all, and even vehemently so, but betokening rather keenness than depth either of intellect or character; a serious, human, honest, but sharp almost fierce-looking thin man, with very much of the militant in his aspect,—in the eyes especially was visible a mixture of sorrow and of anger, or of angry contempt, as if his indignant fight with the world had not yet ended in victory, but also never should in defeat. . . .

Southey recites a verse or two of Praed's.

AFTER Southey's bit of recitation I think the party must have soon broken up. I recollect nothing more of it, except my astonishment when Southey at last completely rose from his chair to shake hands; he had only half risen and nodded on my coming in; and all along I had counted him a lean little man; but now he shot suddenly aloft into a lean tall one, all legs, in shape and stature like a pair of tongs, which peculiarity my surprise doubtless exaggerated to me, but only made it the more notable and entertaining. . . .

After an outburst from Southey on the subject of De Quincey's Reminiscences of the Lake Poets.

I QUITE forget the details, only that I had a good deal of talk with him, in the circle of the others; and had again more than once to notice the singular readiness of his blushes; amiable red blush, beautiful like a young girl's, when you touched genially the pleasant theme; and serpent-like flash of blue or black blush (this far, very far the rarer kind, though it did recur too) when you struck upon the opposite. All details of the evening, except that primary one, are clean gone; but the effect was interesting, pleasantly stimulating and surprising. I said to myself, 'How has this man contrived, with such a nervous system, to keep alive for near sixty years? Now blushing under his grey hairs, rosy like a maiden of fifteen; now slaty almost, like a rattle-snake or fiery serpent? How has he not been torn to pieces long since, under such furious pulling this way and that? He must have somewhere a great deal of methodic virtue in him; I suppose, too, his heart is thoroughly honest, which helps considerably!'

After the publication of the "French Revolution."

SOUTHEY's look, I remarked, was strangely careworn, anxious, though he seemed to like talking, and both talked and listened well; his eyes especially were as if filled with gloomy bewilderment and incurable sorrows. He had got to be about sixty-three, had buried all his suffering loved ones, wound up forty years of incessant vehement labour, much of it more or less ungenial to him; and in fact, though he knew it not, had finished his work in the world; and might well be looking back on it with a kind of ghastly astonishment rather than with triumph or joy!

A summing up.

SOUTHEY I used to construe to myself as a man of slight build, but of sound and elegant; with considerable genius in him, considerable faculty of speech and rhythmic insight, and with a morality that shone distinguished among his contemporaries. I reckoned him (with those blue blushes and those red) to be the perhaps excitablest of all men; and that a deep mute monition of conscience had spoken to him, 'You are capable of running mad, if you don't take care. Acquire habitudes; stick firm as adamant to them at all times, and work, continually work!'

CARLYLE. *Reminiscences.*

WORDSWORTH ON SOUTHEY

A letter to Sir George Beaumont, dated June 3, 1805, in which Wordsworth gives a word of faint commendation to Southey's "Madoc."

WE have read 'Madoc', and been highly pleased with it. It abounds in beautiful pictures and descriptions, happily introduced, and there is an animation diffused through the whole story, though it cannot, perhaps, be said that any of the characters interest you much, except, perhaps, young Llewellyn, whose situation is highly interesting, and he appears to me the best conceived and sustained character in the piece. His speech to his uncle at their meeting in the island is particularly interesting. The poem fails in the highest gifts of the

poet's mind, imagination in the true sense of the word, and knowledge of human nature and the human heart. There is nothing that shows the hand of the great master; but the beauties in description are innumerable . . . and it is a work which does the author high credit, I think.

WORDSWORTH. *Prose Works. Vol. II.*

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1770-1850



Walter de la Mare

AUTHOR OF "THE EXCURSION"

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1770-1850

THE illustrious William Wordsworth, successor to Southey and predecessor of Tennyson in the Laureateship, furnishes perhaps the outstanding example of the importance, in literature, of being without a keen sense of humour. He went to St. John's, Cambridge, at the age of seventeen: took his degree in January, 1791, but displayed no anxiety to join the ranks of any of the learned professions. His family wished him to take Holy Orders, or to read law; but Wordsworth was stubbornly silent, and in the end crossed over to France drawn by a strong desire to make acquaintance with the men who were directing the revolution. According to De Quincey, he stayed there nearly too long, and towards the end became an "object of gloomy suspicion" at a time when to be suspect was only the shortest of steps from the guillotine. There was also a love affair in that French visit, of which the world has heard less than is commonly the case with poets' peccadilloes.

His sister, Dorothy,—"impassioned Dorothy"—began to keep house with him not long after his return: first in Dorsetshire, then at Clevedon and the Quantock Hills, in Somerset. She, all fire and feminine volatility, made precisely the proper complement to the poet; and a fortunate legacy, from Mr. Raisley Calvert, enabled them to live in a sufficiently frugal manner for the next seven or eight years. Then another windfall came in the shape of a longstanding debt, owed to Wordsworth's father for professional services, which was discharged by the new Lord Lonsdale on his succeeding to the title. In 1802 he married Mary Hutchinson, with a small fortune: then the death of one of her uncles brought in a sum that De Quincey estimates at "some thousands": and still later, when his family began to increase and some further support became necessary, came the appointment as stamp-distributor for the County of Westmoreland, with a salary of five hundred a year. Indeed, throughout Wordsworth's long life a regular succession of fortunate windfalls seems to have come punctually to his assistance when most urgently required, enabling him to carry

on his tranquil existence at Grasmere, where he finally settled with his wife and sister, and to carry out his poetical theories.

There was a great fund of simplicity in Wordsworth. In the recently-published "Personal Papers of Lord Rendel" there are two stories that used to be told by Gladstone illustrating respectively Wordsworth's lack of vanity and of humour. Wordsworth, said Gladstone, might have possessed an inner vanity, but he never showed it. After dining with Gladstone at the Albany he would walk home to his London lodgings, first taking off his socks and replacing them with woollen knitted stockings. And he used, it seems, to give as a striking instance of his own humour the story that once near Rydal Mount he met a man running along the road in a state of great excitement, who stopped him and said, "Where is my wife?" To which Wordsworth replied, "I did not even know that you had a wife," and walked on, chuckling at the brilliance of his repartee. Herbert Spencer could hardly have bettered this.

De Quincey wrote his reminiscences of the Lake Poets in general—not altogether to their satisfaction—and to him we owe much of our knowledge of the appearance and personal idiosyncrasies of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. It was apparently at the close of 1807 that, after many nervous hesitations, he met Wordsworth for the first time, having volunteered to escort Coleridge's family to Keswick. "And '*what-like*'—to use a Westmoreland as well as a Scottish expression—'*what-like*' was Wordsworth?" He describes him at length. After mentioning that a well-known reviewer in *Tait's Magazine* had picked out Charles Lamb's head as the finest in a certain collection of literary portraits, he maintains that the critic would have cancelled his sentence had he seen the original heads (of Lamb and Wordsworth) when both were in their prime. But Lamb "bore age with less disadvantage to the intellectual expression of his countenance than Wordsworth, in whom a sanguine complexion had, of late years, usurped upon the original bronze tint; and this change of hue, and change in the quality of skin, had been made fourfold more conspicuous, and more unfavourable in its general effect, by the harsh contrast of grizzled hair which had displaced the original brown." Old age, says De Quincey, commonly brings with it a

mitigating tendency: with Wordsworth it seemed to give him the air of a hardy peasant instead of the "sombre complexion which he once wore, resembling that of a Venetian senator or a Spanish monk."

The best of Haydon's immense oil paintings, the "Entry of Christ into Jerusalem," contains a portrait of Wordsworth in the character of a disciple. But the finest likeness of the poet, according to De Quincey, is to be found in the portrait of Milton prefixed to Jonathan Richardson's volume of explanatory notes on "Paradise Lost"—which portrait, by Richardson's own testimony, was the only one acknowledged by Milton's last surviving daughter to be an exact likeness of her father. Wordsworth's face was of the long order, which indeed is the indigenous type of the Lake district. The head (unlike that of Charles Lamb) was well filled out; the forehead not remarkably lofty. Nor were the eyes large: they were in fact rather small, and not bright, lustrous or piercing. But let De Quincey continue in his own words.

DE QUINCEY ON WORDSWORTH

AFTER a long day's toil in walking, I have seen them assume an appearance the most solemn and spiritual that it is possible for the human eye to wear. The light which resides in them is at no time a superficial light; but, under favourable accidents, it is a light which seems to come from unfathomed depths: in fact, it is more truly entitled to be held "the light that never was on land or sea," a light radiating from some far spiritual world, than any the most idealizing that ever yet a painter's hand created. The nose, a little arched, is large; which, by the way (according to a natural phrenology, existing centuries ago amongst some of the lowest amongst the human species), has always been accounted an unequivocal expression of animal appetites organically strong. And that expressed the simple truth: Wordsworth's intellectual passions were fervent and strong: but they rested upon a basis of preternatural animal sensibility diffused through *all* the animal passions (or appetites); and something of that will be found to hold of all poets who have been great by original force and power, not (as Virgil) by means of fine management and exquisite artifice of

composition applied to their conceptions. The mouth, and the whole circumjacencies of the mouth, composed the strongest feature in Wordsworth's face; there was nothing specially to be noticed that I know of in the mere outline of the lips; but the swell and protrusion of the parts above and around the mouth are . . . noticeable.

I take one more passage—again from the reminiscences of the Lake Poets—describing his bodily formation, which De Quincey did not place upon the same high level.

HE was, upon the whole, not a well-made man. His legs were pointedly condemned by all female connoisseurs in legs; not that they were bad in any way which *would* force itself upon your notice—there was no absolute deformity about them; and undoubtedly they had been serviceable legs beyond the average standard of human requisition; for I calculate, upon good data, that with these identical legs Wordsworth must have traversed a distance of 175,000 to 180,000 English miles—a mode of exertion which, to him, stood in the stead of alcohol and all other stimulants whatsoever to the animal spirits; to which, indeed, he was indebted for a life of unclouded happiness, and we for much of what is most excellent in his writings. But useful as they have proved themselves, the Wordsworthian legs were certainly not ornamental; and it was really a pity, as I agreed with a lady in thinking, that he had not another pair for evening dress parties. . . . A sculptor would certainly have disapproved of their contour. But the worst part of Wordsworth's person was the bust; there was a narrowness and a droop about the shoulders which became striking, and had an effect of meanness, when brought into close juxtaposition with a figure of a more statuesque build.

DE QUINCEY. *Literary Reminiscences.*

De Quincey was one of the earliest to appreciate Wordsworth, having been, as he said, the "only man in all Europe" to quote him as early as 1802. In 1809 he visited the family at Grasmere, and returned in the autumn of that year to a cottage in the neighbourhood. But his friendship with the Lake Poets gradually diminished, and his reminiscences of their circle which he published in Tait's Edinburgh Magazine in 1834 gave offence to Southey, in par-

ticular. The following quotation is from an article on Wordsworth's Poetry contributed to Tait's Magazine in September, 1845.

... SELDOM, indeed, is your own silent retrospect of close personal connexions with distinguished men altogether happy. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of princes"—this has been the warning—this has been the farewell moral, winding up and pointing the experience of dying statesmen. Not less truly it might be said, "Put not your trust in the intellectual princes of your age"; form no connexions too close with any who live only in the atmosphere of admiration and praise. The love or the friendship of such people rarely contracts itself into the narrow circle of individuals. You, if you are brilliant like themselves, or in any degree standing upon intellectual pretensions, such men will hate; you, if you are dull, they will despise. Gaze, therefore, on the splendour of such idols as a passing stranger. Look for a moment as one sharing in the idolatry; but pass on before the splendour has been sullied by human frailty, or before your own generous admiration has been confounded with offerings of weeds, or with the homage of the sycophantic.

The "Theory of Poetic Diction."

ONE original obstacle to the favourable impression of the Wordsworthian poetry, and an obstacle purely self-created, was his theory of Poetic Diction. The diction itself, without the theory, was of less consequence; for the mass of readers would have been too blind or too careless to notice it. But the preface to the second edition of his Poems (2 vols., 1799–1800) compelled all readers to notice it. Nothing more injudicious was ever done by man. An unpopular truth would, at any rate, have been a bad inauguration for what, on *other* accounts, the author had announced as "an experiment." His poetry was already, and confessedly, an experiment as regarded the quality of the subjects selected, and as regarded the mode of treating them. That was surely trial enough for the reader's untrained sensibilities, without the unpopular novelty besides as to the quality of the diction. But, in the meantime, this novelty, besides being unpopular, was also in part false; it was true, and it was *not* true. And it was not true in a double way.

Stating broadly, and allowing it to be taken for his meaning, that the diction of ordinary life (in his own words, "the very language of men") was the proper diction for poetry, the writer meant no such thing; for only a part of this diction, according to his own subsequent restriction, was available for such a use. And, secondly, as his own subsequent practice showed, even this part was available only for peculiar classes of poetry. In his own exquisite "Laodamia," in his "Sonnets," in his "Excursion," few are his obligations to the idiomatic language of life, as distinguished from that of books, or of prescriptive usage. . . .

The critics' blunder.

BUT a blunder, more perhaps from thoughtlessness and careless reading than from malice, on the part of the professional critics ought to have roused Wordsworth into a firmer feeling of the entire question. These critics had fancied that, in Wordsworth's estimate, whatsoever was plebeian was also poetically just in diction—not as though the impassioned phrase were sometimes the vernacular phrase, but as though the vernacular phrase were universally the impassioned. They naturally went on to suggest, as a corollary which Wordsworth (as they fancied) could not refuse, that Dryden and Pope must be translated into the flash diction of prisons and the slang of streets before they could be regarded as poetically costumed. Now, so far as these critics were concerned, the answer would have been simply to say that much in the poets mentioned, but especially of the racy Dryden, actually *is* in that vernacular diction for which Wordsworth contended, and, for the other part, which is *not*, frequently it *does* require the very purgation (if *that* were possible) which the critics were presuming to be so absurd. In Pope, and sometimes in Dryden, there is much of the unfeeling and the prescriptive diction which Wordsworth denounced. During the eighty years between 1660 and 1740 grew up that scrofulous taint in our diction which was denounced by Wordsworth as technically received for "poetic language"; and if Dryden and Pope were less infected than others, this was merely because their understandings were finer. Much there is in both poets, as regards diction, which *does* require correction, and correction of the kind presumed by the

Wordsworth theory. And if, *so* far, the critics should resist Wordsworth's principle of reform, not he, but they, would have been found the patrons of deformity. This course would soon have turned the tables upon the critics. For the poets, or the class of poets, whom they unwisely selected as models susceptible of no correction, happen to be those who chiefly require it. But *their* foolish selection ought not to have intercepted or clouded the true question when put in another shape, since in this shape it opens into a very troublesome dilemma. Spenser, Shakspere, the Bible of 1611, and Milton—how say you, William Wordsworth—are these sound and true as to diction, or are they not? If you say they *are*, then what is it that you are proposing to change? What room for a revolution? Would you, as Sancho says, have "better bread than is made of wheat"? But, if you say *No*, they are *not* sound, then, indeed, you open a fearful range to your own artillery, but in a war greater than you could, by possibility, have contemplated. . . .

It is clear, therefore, that Wordsworth thus far erred, and caused needless embarrassment, equally to the attack and to the defence, by not assigning the names of the parties offending whom he had specially contemplated. The bodies of the criminals should have been had into court. But much more he erred in another point, where his neglect cannot be thought of without astonishment. The whole appeal turned upon a comparison between two modes of phraseology; each of which, the bad and the good, should have been extensively illustrated; and until that were done the whole dispute was an aerial subtlety, equally beyond the grasp of the best critic and the worst. How could a man so much in earnest, and so deeply interested in the question, commit so capital an oversight? *Tantamne rem tam negligenter?*

DE QUINCEY. *Tait's Magazine*, Sept., 1845: reprinted in 1857 in Vol. VI of his collected writings.

BYRON ON WORDSWORTH

Byron once reviewed Wordsworth, in a periodical called *Monthly Literary Recreations*, date August, 1807—the same year that saw the publication of "Hours of Idleness." Here are two excerpts: THE pieces least worthy of the author are those entitled "Moods

of my own Mind." We certainly wish these "Moods" had been less frequent, or not permitted to occupy a place near works which only make their deformity more obvious; when Mr. W. ceases to please, it is by "abandoning" his mind to the most commonplace ideas, at the same time clothing them in language not simple, but puerile. What will any reader or auditor, out of the nursery, say to such namby-pamby as "Lines written at the Foot of Brother's Bridge?"

... On the whole, however, with the exception of the above, and other INNOCENT odes of the same cast, we think these volumes display a genius worthy of higher pursuits, and regret that Mr. W. confines his muse to such trifling subjects. We trust his motto will be in future "Paullo majora canamus." Many, with inferior abilities, have acquired a loftier seat on Parnassus, merely by attempting strains in which Mr. Wordsworth is more qualified to excel.

MOORE. *Life of Byron.*

KEATS ON WORDSWORTH

Wordsworth leaves a bad impression—on Keats. Taken from one of Keats's letters to his brother, dated Feb. 21st., 1818.

I AM sorry that Wordsworth has left a bad impression wherever he visited in town by his egotism, Vanity, and bigotry. Yet he is a great poet if not a philosopher.

KEATS. *Letters.*

POE ON WORDSWORTH

Poe has no faith in Wordsworth.

As to Wordsworth, I have no faith in him. That he had in youth the feelings of a poet I believe—for there are glimpses of extreme delicacy in his writings—(and delicacy is the poet's own kingdom—his El Dorado)—but they have the appearance of a better day recollected; and glimpses, at best, are little evidence of present poetic fire—we know that a few straggling flowers spring up daily in the crevices of the glacier.

He was to blame in wearing away his youth in contemplation with the end of poetising in his manhood. With the increase of his judgment the light which should make it apparent has faded away. His judgment consequently is too correct. This may not be understood,—but the old Goths of

Germany would have understood it, who used to debate matters of importance to their State twice, once when drunk, and once when sober—sober that they might not be deficient in formality—drunk lest they should be destitute of vigour.

The long wordy discussions by which he tries to reason us into admiration of his poetry speak very little in his favour: they are full of such assertions as this (I have opened one of his volumes at random)—“Of genius the only proof is the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before”—indeed? then it follows that in doing what is *un*-worthy to be done, or what *has* been done before, no genius can be evinced; yet the picking of pockets is an unworthy act, pockets have been picked time immemorial, and Barrington, the pickpocket, in point of genius, would have thought hard of a comparison with William Wordsworth, the poet.

EDGAR ALLAN POE. *Essays.*

CARLYLE ON WORDSWORTH

Carlyle meets Wordsworth at Henry Taylor's, and writes his impressions in a letter.

I DID not expect much, but got mostly what I expected. The old man has a fine shrewdness and naturalness in his expression of face, a long Cumberland figure; one finds also a kind of *sincerity* in his speech. But for prolixity, thinness, endless dilution, it excels all the other speech I had heard from mortals. A genuine man, which is much, but also essentially a small genuine man. Nothing perhaps is sadder (of the glad kind) than the unbounded laudation of such a man, sad proof of the rarity of such. I fancy, however, that he has fallen into the garrulity of age, and is not what he was; also that his environment and rural prophethood has hurt him much. He seems impatient that even Shakespeare should be admired. ‘So much out of my own pocket.’ The shake of hand he gives you is feckless, egotistical. I rather fancy he loves nothing in the world so much as one could wish. When I compare that man with a great man, alas! he is like dwindling into a contemptibility. Jean Paul, for example (neither was he great), could have worn him in a finger-ring.

And again:

HAVE seen Wordsworth, an old, very loquacious—indeed, quite prosing man, with a tint of naturalness, of sincere insight, nevertheless. He has been much spoiled; king of his company, unrecognised, and then adulated. Worth little now. A genuine kind of man, but intrinsically and extrinsically a small one, let them sing or say what they will. The languid way in which he gives you a handful of numb unresponsive fingers is very significant. It seems also rather to grieve him that you have any admiration for anybody but him. The style in which he, clipping, qualifying, and wearisomely questioning without answer, spoke of Burns and Shakespeare, finding or guessing that to me he was all too little in comparison, was melancholy to hear. No man that I ever met has given me less, has disappointed me less. My peace be with him, and a happy evening to his, on the whole, respectable life.

FROUDE. *Carlyle's Life in London.*

One more short passage from the Journal:

May 26, 1835.—Went on Sunday with Wordsworth's new volume to Kensington Gardens; got through most of it there. A picture of a wren's nest, two pictures of such almost all that abides with me. A genuine but a small diluted man. No other thing can I think of him. . . .

FROUDE. *Ibid.*

Wordsworth again.

I HAVE seen Wordsworth again, and find my former interpretation of him strengthened. He seems to me a most *natural* man (a mighty point in these days); and flows on there, delivering what is really in him, platitudes or wisdoms as the case may be. A really *earthborn well*, not an artificial *jet d'eau*: let us be satisfied with the “day of small things.”

CARLYLE. *Letters to J. S. Mill.*

Carlyle talks of Wordsworth, to Gavan Duffy.

THOUGH Wordsworth was the man of most practical mind of any of the persons connected with literature whom he had encountered, his pastoral pipings were far from being of the

importance his admirers imagined. He was essentially a cold, hard, silent, practical man, who, if he had not fallen into poetry, would have done effectual work of some sort in the world. This was the impression one got of him as he looked out of his stern blue eyes, superior to men and circumstances.

I said I had expected to hear of a man of softer mood, more sympathetic and less taciturn.

Carlyle said, No, not at all; he was a man quite other than that; a man of an immense head and great jaws like a crocodile's, cast in a mould designed for prodigious work.

SIR CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY. *Conversations with Carlyle.*

LEIGH HUNT ON WORDSWORTH

In Leigh Hunt's Autobiography there are two sketches of Wordsworth, one in 1815, when he paid Hunt a visit to thank him for the "zeal shown in advocating his genius," and another thirty years later, when it is clear that the poet had mellowed with age. I give the two descriptions here for purposes of comparison.

MR. WORDSWORTH, whom Mr. Hazlitt designated as one that would have had the wide circle of his humanities made still wider, and a good deal more pleasant, by dividing a little more of his time between his lakes in Westmoreland and the hotels of the metropolis, had a dignified manner, with a deep and roughish but not unpleasing voice, and an exalted mode of speaking. He had a habit of keeping his left hand in the bosom of his waistcoat; and in this attitude, except when he turned round to take one of the subjects of his criticism from the shelves (for his contemporaries were there also), he sat dealing forth his eloquent but hardly catholic judgments. In his "father's house" there were not "many mansions." He was as sceptical on the merits of all kinds of poetry but one, as Richardson was on those of the novels of Fielding.

Resemblance to Wellington.

I DID not see this distinguished person again till thirty years afterwards; when, I should venture to say, his manner was greatly superior to what it was in the former instance; indeed, quite natural and noble, with a cheerful air of animal as well as

spiritual confidence; a gallant bearing, curiously reminding me of the Duke of Wellington, as I saw him walking some eighteen years ago by a lady's side, with no unbecoming oblivion of his time of life. I observed, also, that the poet no longer committed himself to scornful criticisms, or indeed to any criticisms whatever, at least as far as I knew. . . .

Inspired eyes.

WALTER SCOTT said, that the eyes of Burns were the finest he ever saw. I cannot say the same of Mr. Wordsworth's; that is, not in the sense of the beautiful, or even of the profound. But certainly I never beheld eyes that looked so inspired or supernatural. They were like fires half burning, half smouldering, with a sort of acrid fixture of regard, and seated at the further end of two caverns. One might imagine Ezekiel or Isaiah to have had such eyes.

LEIGH HUNT. *Autobiography.*

THE EDINBURGH REVIEW ON WORDSWORTH

From the review of Poems, in Two Volumes. By William Wordsworth, Author of the Lyrical Ballads. 8vo, pp. 320. London, 1807.

. . . WHAT we do maintain is, that much of the most popular poetry in the world owes its celebrity chiefly to the beauty of its diction; and that no poetry can be long or generally acceptable, the language of which is coarse, inelegant, or infantine.

From this great source of pleasure, we think the readers of Mr. Wordsworth are in a great measure cut off. His diction has nowhere any pretensions to elegance or dignity; and he has scarcely ever condescended to give the grace of correctness or melody to his versification. If it were merely slovenly or neglectful, however, all this might be endured. Strong sense and powerful feeling will ennoble any expressions; or, at least, no one who is capable of estimating those higher merits, will be disposed to mark these little defects. But, in good truth, no man, now-a-days, composes verses for publication with a slovenly neglect of their language. It is a fine and laborious manufacture, which can scarcely ever be made in a hurry; and the faults which it has, may, for the most part, be set down

to bad taste or incapacity, rather than to carelessness or oversight. With Mr. Wordsworth and his friends, it is plain that their peculiarities of diction are things of choice, and not of accident. They write as they do upon principle and system; and it evidently costs them much pains to keep *down* to the standard which they have proposed to themselves. They are, to the full, as much mannerists, too, as the poetasters who ring changes on the common places of magazine versification; and all the difference between them is, that they borrow their phrases from a different and a scantier *gradus ad Parnassum*. If they were, indeed, to discard all imitation and set phraseology, and to bring in no words merely for show or for metre,—as much, perhaps, might be gained in freedom and originality, as would infallibly be lost in allusion and authority; but, in point of fact, the new poets are just as great borrowers as the old; only that, instead of borrowing from the more popular passages of their illustrious predecessors, they have preferred furnishing themselves from vulgar ballads and plebeian nurseries.

These peculiarities of diction, alone, are enough, perhaps, to render them ridiculous; but the author before us really seems anxious to court this literary martyrdom by a device still more infallible,—we mean, that of connecting his most lofty, tender, or impassioned conceptions, with objects and incidents, which the greater part of his readers will probably persist in thinking low, silly, or uninteresting. Whether this is done from affectation and conceit alone, or whether it may not arise, in some measure, from the self-illusion of a mind of extraordinary sensibility, habituated to solitary meditation, we cannot undertake to determine. It is possible enough, we allow, that the sight of a friend's garden-spade, or a sparrow's nest, or a man gathering leeches, might really have suggested to such a mind a train of powerful impressions and interesting reflections; but it is certain, that, to most minds, such associations will always appear forced, strained, and unnatural; and that the composition in which it is attempted to exhibit them, will always have the air of parody, or ludicrous and affected singularity. All the world laughs at Elegiac stanzas to a sucking-pig—a Hymn on Washing day—Sonnets to one's grandmother—or Pindarics on gooseberry-pye; and yet, we are afraid, it will not be quite easy to convince Mr. Wordsworth, that the same

ridicule must infallibly attach to most of the pathetic pieces in this volume. . . .

Edinburgh Review. Oct., 1807.

FELICIA HEMANS ON WORDSWORTH

Mrs. Hemans visits Wordsworth. From a letter dated June 22, 1830.

. . . I FELT very forlorn after you were gone from Ambleside. . . . My nervous fear at the idea of presenting myself to Mr. Wordsworth grew upon me so rapidly, that it was more than seven before I took courage to leave the inn. I had indeed little cause for such trepidation. I was driven to a lovely cottage-like building, almost hidden by a profusion of roses and ivy; and a most benignant-looking old man greeted me in the porch: this was Mr. Wordsworth himself; and when I tell you that, having rather a large party of visitors in the house, he led me to a room apart from them, and brought in his family by degrees, I am sure that little trait will give you an idea of considerate kindness which you will both like and appreciate. In half an hour I felt myself as much at ease with him as I had been with Sir Walter Scott in half a day. I laughed to find myself saying, on the occasion of some little domestic occurrence, 'Mr. Wordsworth, how could you be so giddy?' He has, undeniably, a lurking love of mischief. . . .

Two days later.

. . . I AM charmed with Mr. Wordsworth himself; his manners are distinguished by that frank simplicity which I believe to be ever the characteristic of *real* genius; his conversation perfectly free and unaffected, yet remarkable for power of expression and vivid imagery; when the subject calls forth anything like enthusiasm, the poet breaks out frequently and delightfully, and his gentle and affectionate playfulness in the intercourse with all members of his family, would of itself sufficiently refute Moore's theory in the *Life of Byron*, with regard to the unfitness of genius for domestic happiness.

H. F. CHORLEY. *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans.*

The favourite reading of Mrs. Hemans, in later life.

As to the poetry she then loved best and read oftenest, it was, beyond all comparison, Wordsworth's. Much as she had admired his writings before, they became more than ever endeared to her; and it is a fact, that during the four last years of her life, she never, except when prevented by illness, passed a single day without reading something of his. I have heard her say, that Wordsworth and Shelley were once the spirits contending to obtain the mastery over her's: that the former soon gained the ascendancy, is not, I think, to be wondered at; for much as she delighted in Shelley, she pitied him still more. In defining the distinction between the genius of Wordsworth and that of Byron, I remember her saying, that it required a higher power to still a tempest than to raise one, and that she considered it the part of the former to calm, and of the latter to disturb the mind.

CHORLEY. *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans.*

JEFFREY ON WORDSWORTH

“This will never do!” Jeffrey writes on “The Excursion.”

DID Mr. Wordsworth really imagine that his favourite doctrines were likely to gain anything in point of effect or authority by being put into the mouth of a person accustomed to higgle about tape or brass sleeve-buttons? Or is it not plain that, independent of the ridicule and disgust which such a personification must give to many of his readers, its adoption exposes his work throughout to the charge of revolting incongruity and utter disregard of probability or nature? For, after he has thus wilfully debased his moral teacher by a low occupation, is there one word that he puts into his mouth, or one sentiment of which he makes him the organ, that has the most remote reference to that occupation? Is there anything in his learned, abstracted, and logical harangues that savours of the calling that is ascribed to him? . . . A man who went about selling flannel and pocket handkerchiefs in this lofty diction would soon frighten away all his customers, and would infallibly pass either for a madman or for some learned and affected

gentleman who in a frolic had taken up a character which he was peculiarly ill-qualified for supporting.

Edinburgh Review. Nov., 1814.

H. CRABB ROBINSON¹ ON WORDSWORTH

Wordsworth recommends his favourite poems.

HE spoke of the changes in his new poems. He has substituted *ebullient* for *fiery*, speaking of the nightingale, and *jocund* for *laughing*, applied to the daffodils; but he will probably restore the original epithets. . . . On my alluding to the lines,—

“Three feet long and two feet wide,”

and confessing that I dared not read them aloud in company, he said, “They ought to be liked.”

Wordsworth particularly recommended to me, among his Poems of Imagination, “Yew Trees,” and a description of Night. These he says are among the best for the imaginative power displayed in them. I have since read them. They are fine, but I believe I do not understand in what their excellence consists. The poet himself, as Hazlitt has well observed, has a pride in deriving no aid from his subject. It is the mere power which he is conscious of exerting in which he delights, not the production of a work in which men rejoice on account of the sympathies and sensibilities it excites in them.

Diary, etc., of H. Crabb Robinson.

HOOD ON WORDSWORTH

Charles Lamb had asked Hood to tea, “to meet Wordsworth,” and, though crippled with rheumatism, Hood felt that he could not resist the spell of that name.

so I put on my great-coat, and in a few minutes found myself, for the first time, at a door, that opened to me as frankly as its master’s heart; for, without any preliminaries of hall, passage, or parlour, one single step across the threshold brought me into the sitting-room, and in sight of the domestic hearth. The

¹ Henry Crabb Robinson, 1775–1867, was a leading figure in Samuel Rogers’s literary circle.

room looked brown with "old bokes," and beside the fire sate Wordsworth, and his sister, the hospitable Elia, and the excellent Bridget. As for the bard of Rydal, his outward man did not, perhaps, disappoint one; but the *palaver*, as the Indians say, fell short of my anticipations. Perhaps my memory is in fault; 'twas many years ago, and, unlike the biographer of Johnson, I have never made Bozziness my business. However, excepting a discussion on the value of the promissory notes issued by our younger poets, wherein Wordsworth named Shelley, and Lamb took John Keats for choice, there was nothing of literary interest brought upon the carpet. But a book man cannot always be bookish. A poet, even a Rydal one, must be glad at times to descend from Saddleback, and feel his legs. He cannot, like the Girl in the Fairy Tale, be always talking diamonds and pearls. It is a "Vulgar Errour" to suppose that an author must be always authoring, even with his feet on the fender. . . .

THOMAS HOOD. *Literary Reminiscences* (from *Hood's Own*).

CHARLES LAMB ON WORDSWORTH

In January, 1801, Lamb wrote a letter to Wordsworth containing some mild criticisms of the "Lyrical Ballads," which were, however, not mild enough for the two authors. In the following letter, addressed to Manning, Lamb gives an account of the two remonstrances he received.

February 15, 1801.

I HAD need be cautious henceforward what opinion I give of the *Lyrical Ballads*. All the North of England are in a turmoil. Cumberland and Westmoreland have already declared a state of war. I lately received from Wordsworth a copy of the second volume, accompanied by an acknowledgement of having received from me many months since a copy of a certain Tragedy, with excuses for not having made any acknowledgement sooner, it being owing to an "almost insurmountable aversion from Letter-writing." This letter I answered in due form and time, and enumerated several of the passages which had most affected me, adding, unfortunately, that no single piece had moved me so forcibly as the "Ancient Mariner," "The Mad Mother," or the "Lines at Tintern Abbey." The

Poet did not sleep a moment. I received almost instantaneously a long letter of four sweating pages from my Reluctant Letter-writer, the purport of which was, that he was sorry his 2d vol. had not given me more pleasure (Devil a hint did I give that it had *not pleased me*), and "was compelled to wish that my range of sensibility was more extended, being obliged to believe that I should receive large influxes of happiness and happy Thoughts" (I suppose from the L.B.). With a deal of stuff about a certain Union of Tenderness and Imagination, which in the sense he used Imagination was not the characteristic of Shakspeare, but which Milton possessed in a degree far exceeding other Poets: which Union, as the highest species of Poetry, and chiefly deserving that name, "He was most proud to aspire to"; then illustrating the said Union by two quotations from his own 2d vol. (which I had been so unfortunate as to miss). 1st Specimen—a father addresses his son—

"When thou
First camest into the World, as it befalls
To new-born Infants, thou didst sleep away
Two days: and *Blessings from thy father's Tongue*
Then fell upon thee."

The lines were thus undermarked, and then followed, "This Passage, as combining to an extraordinary degree that Union of Imagination and Tenderness which I am speaking of, I consider as one of the Best I ever wrote!"

2d Specimen.—A youth, after years of absence, revisits his native place, and thinks (as most people do) that there has been strange alteration in his absence:—

"And that the rocks
And everlasting Hills themselves were changed."

You see both these are good Poetry: but after one has been reading Shakspeare twenty of the best years of one's life, to have a fellow start up, and prate about some unknown quality which Shakspeare possessed in a degree inferior to Milton and *somebody else!!* This was not to be *all* my castigation. Coleridge, who had not written to me some months before, starts up from his bed of sickness to reprove me for my hardy presumption: four long pages, equally sweaty and more tedious, came

from him; assuring me that, when the works of a man of true genius such as W. undoubtedly was, do not please me at first sight, I should suspect the fault to lie "in me and not in them," etc. etc. etc. etc. What am I to do with such people? I certainly shall write them a very merry letter. Writing to *you*, I may say that the 2d vol. has no such pieces as the three I enumerated. It is full of original thinking and an observing mind, but it does not often make you laugh or cry.—It too artfully aims at simplicity of expression. And you sometimes doubt if Simplicity be not a cover for Poverty. . . .

CHARLES LAMB. *Letters.*

EMERSON ON WORDSWORTH

Wordsworth obliges with a Recitation.

HIS daughters called in their father, a plain, elderly, white-haired man, not prepossessing, and disfigured by green goggles. He sat down, and talked with great simplicity. He had just returned from a journey. His health was good, but he had broken a tooth by a fall, when walking with two lawyers, and had said, that he was glad it did not happen forty years ago; whereupon they had praised his philosophy.

I inquired whether he had read Carlyle's critical articles and translations. He said, he thought him sometimes insane. He proceeded to abuse Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister" heartily. It was full of all manner of fornication. It was like the crossing of flies in the air. He had never gone further than the first part; so disgusted was he that he threw the book across the room. I deprecated this wrath, and said what I could for the better parts of the book; and he courteously promised to look at it again. . . . His eyes are much inflamed. This is no loss, except for reading, because he never writes prose, and of poetry he carries even hundreds of lines in his head before writing them. He had just returned from a visit to Staffa, and within three days had made three sonnets on Fingal's Cave, and was composing a fourth, when he was called in to see me. He said, "If you are interested in my verses, perhaps you will like to hear these lines." I gladly assented; and he recollected himself for a few moments, and then stood forth and repeated, one after the other, the three entire sonnets with

great animation. I fancied the second and third more beautiful than his poems are wont to be. The third is addressed to the flowers, which, he said, especially the ox-eye daisy, are very abundant on the top of the rock. The second alludes to the name of the rock, which is "Cave of Music;" the first to the circumstance of its being visited by the promiscuous company of the steamboat.

This recitation was so unlooked for and surprising—he, the old Wordsworth, standing apart, and reciting to me in a garden-walk, like a schoolboy declaiming—that I at first was near to laugh; but recollecting myself, that I had come thus far to see a poet, and he was chanting poems to me, I saw that he was right and I was wrong, and gladly gave myself up to hear. . . .

Wordsworth honoured himself by his simple adherence to truth, and was very willing not to shine; but he surprised by the hard limits of his thought. To judge from a single conversation, he made the impression of a narrow and very English mind; of one who paid for his rare elevation by general tame-ness and conformity. Off his own beat, his opinions were of no value.

R. W. EMERSON. *English Traits.*

Emerson's Second Visit.

AT Ambleside, in March, 1848, I was for a couple of days the guest of Miss Martineau, then newly returned from her Egyptian tour. On Sunday afternoon, I accompanied her to Rydal Mount. . . . We found Mr. Wordsworth asleep on the sofa. He was at first silent and indisposed, as an old man suddenly waked, before he had ended his nap; but soon became full of talk on the French news. He was nationally bitter on the French: bitter on Scotchmen, too. No Scotchman, he said, can write English. He detailed the two models, on one or the other of which all the sentences of the historian Robertson are framed. Nor could Jeffrey, nor the *Edinburgh Reviewers* write English, nor can —, who is a pest to the English tongue. Incidentally, he added, Gibbon cannot write English. The *Edinburgh Review* wrote what would tell and what would sell. It had, however, changed the tone of its literary criticism from the time when a certain letter was written to the editor by

Coleridge. Mrs. W. had the editor's answer in her possession. . . .

His opinions of French, English, Irish, and Scotch seemed rashly formulized from little anecdotes of what had befallen himself and members of his family, in a diligence or stage-coach. His face sometimes lighted up, but his conversation was not marked by special force or elevation. Yet perhaps it is a high compliment to the cultivation of the English generally, when we find such a man not distinguished. He had a healthy look, with a weather-beaten face, his face corrugated, especially the large nose.

*English Traits.**Wordsworth as Host.*

MISS MARTINEAU, who lived near him, praised him to me not for his poetry, but for thrift and economy; for having afforded to his country neighbours an example of a modest household, where comfort and culture were secured without any display. She said, that, in his early housekeeping at the cottage where he first lived, he was accustomed to offer his friends bread and plainest fare: if they wanted anything more, they must pay him for their board. It was the rule of the house. I replied, that it evinced English pluck more than any anecdote I knew. A gentleman in the neighbourhood told the story of Walter Scott's staying once for a week with Wordsworth, and slipping out every day, under pretence of a walk, to the Swan Inn, for a cold cut and porter; and one day passing with Wordsworth the inn, he was betrayed by the landlord asking him if he had come for his porter.¹

Emerson Sums Up.

I do not attach much importance to the disparagement of Wordsworth among London scholars. Who reads him well will know, that in following the strong bent of his genius, he was

¹ There is no mention of this incident in Lockhart's "Life." The courtly biographer confines himself to remarking that "about this time (1805) Mr. and Mrs. Scott made a short excursion to the Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, and visited some of their finest scenery, in company with Mr. Wordsworth. I have found no written narrative of this little tour, but I have often heard Scott speak with enthusiastic delight of the reception he met with in the humble cottage which his brother poet then inhabited on the banks of Grasmere."

careless of the many, careless also of the few, self-assured that he should "create the taste by which he is to be enjoyed." He lived long enough to witness the revolution he had wrought, and "to see what he foresaw." There are torpid places in his mind, there is something hard and sterile in his poetry, want of grace and variety, want of due catholicity and cosmopolitan scope: he had conformities to English politics and traditions; he had egotistic puerilities in the choice and treatment of his subjects; but let us say of him, that, alone in his time he treated the human mind well, and with an absolute trust. His adherence to his poetic creed rested on real inspirations. The "Ode on Immortality" is the high-water-mark which the intellect has reached in this age. New means were employed, and new realms added to the empire of the Muse, by his courage.

English Traits.

GREVILLE ON WORDSWORTH

Wordsworth in the Greville Memoirs.

I AM just come from breakfasting with Henry Taylor to meet Wordsworth; the same party as when he had Southey—Mill, Elliot, Charles Villiers. Wordsworth may be bordering on sixty; hard-featured, brown, wrinkled, with prominent teeth and a few scattered grey hairs, but nevertheless not a disagreeable countenance; and very cheerful, merry, courteous, and talkative, much more so than I should have expected from the grave and didactic character of his writings. He held forth on poetry, painting, politics, and metaphysics, and with a great deal of eloquence; he is more conversible and with a greater flow of animal spirits than Southey. He mentioned that he never wrote down as he composed, but composed walking, riding, or in bed, and wrote down after; that Southey always composes at his desk.

Greville Memoirs, Vol. II.

CÖLERIDGE ON WORDSWORTH

I HAVE often wished that the first two books of the *Excursion* had been published separately, under the name of "The *Deserted Cottage*." They would have formed, what indeed they are, one of the most beautiful poems in the language.

I think Wordsworth possessed more of the genius of a great

philosophic poet than any man I ever knew, or, as I believe, has existed in England since Milton; but it seems to me that he ought never to have abandoned the contemplative position, which is peculiarly—perhaps I might say exclusively—fitted for him. His proper title is *Spectator ab extra*.

Although Wordsworth and Goethe are not much alike upon the whole, yet they both have this peculiarity of utter non-sympathy with the subjects of their poetry. They are always, both of them, *feeling for*, but never *with*, their characters.

I cannot help regretting that Wordsworth did not first publish his thirteen books on the growth of an individual mind—superior, as I used to think, upon the whole, to the *Excursion*. You may judge how I felt about them by my own poem on the occasion.¹ Then the plan laid out, and, I believe, partly suggested by me, was, that Wordsworth should assume the station of a man in mental repose, one whose principles were made up, and so prepared to deliver upon authority a system of philosophy. He was to treat man as man, a subject of eye, ear, touch, and taste, in contact with external nature, and informing the senses from the mind, and not compounding a mind out of the senses; then he was to describe the pastoral and other states of society, assuming something of the Juvenalian spirit as he approached the high civilization of cities and towns, and opening a melancholy picture of the present state of degeneracy and vice; thence he was to infer and reveal the proof of, and necessity for, the whole state of man and society being subject to, and illustrative of, a redemptive process in operation, showing how this idea reconciled all the anomalies, and promised future glory and restoration. Something of this sort was, I think, agreed on. It is, in substance, what I have been all my life doing in my system of philosophy.

COLERIDGE. *Table Talk.*

HAZLITT ON WORDSWORTH

MR. WORDSWORTH is the last man to 'look abroad into universality,' if that alone constituted genius: he looks at home into

¹ The poem in question may be found in "Sibylline Leaves." It bears the somewhat cumbrous title: *To a Gentleman (W. Wordsworth), Composed on the Night after his Recitation of a Poem on the Growth of an Individual Mind.*

himself and is 'content with riches fineless.' He would in the other case be 'poor as winter,' if he had nothing but general capacity to trust to. He is the greatest, that is, the most original poet of present day, only because he is the greatest egotist. He is 'self-involved, not dark.' He sits in the centre of his own being, and there 'enjoys bright day.' He does not waste a thought on others. Whatever does not relate exclusively and wholly to himself is foreign to his views. He contemplates a whole-length figure of himself, he looks along the unbroken line of his personal identity. He thrusts aside all other objects, all other interests, with scorn and impatience, that he may repose on his own being, that he may dig out the treasures of thought contained in it, that he may unfold the precious stores of a mind for ever brooding over itself. His genius is the effect of his individual character. He stamps that character, that deep individual interest, on whatever he meets. The object is nothing but as it furnishes food for internal meditation, for old associations. If there had been no other being in the universe, Mr. Wordsworth's poetry would have been just what it is. If there had been neither love nor friendship, neither ambition nor pleasure nor business in the world, the author of the *Lyrical Ballads* need not have been greatly changed from what he is—might still have kept the noiseless tenour of his way; retired in the sanctuary of his own heart, hallowing the Sabbath of his own thoughts. With the passions, the pursuits, and imaginations of other men he does not profess to sympathise, but 'finds tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.' With a mind averse from outward objects, but ever intent upon its own workings, he hangs a weight of thought and feeling upon every trifling circumstance connected with his past history. The note of the cuckoo sounds in his ear like the voice of other years; the daisy spreads its leaves in the rays of boyish delight that stream from his thoughtful eyes; the rainbow lifts its proud arch in heaven but to mark his progress from infancy to manhood; an old thorn is buried, bowed down under the mass of associations he has wound about it; and to him, as he himself beautifully says,

The meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

It is this power of habitual sentiment, or of transferring the interest of our conscious existence to whatever gently solicits attention, and is a link in the chain of association without rousing our passions or hurting our pride, that is the striking feature in Mr. Wordsworth's mind and poetry. Others have felt and shown this power before, as Withers, Burns, etc., but none have felt it so intensely and absolutely as to lend to it the voice of inspiration, as to make it the foundation of a new style and school in poetry. His strength, as it so often happens, arises from the excess of his weakness. But he has opened a new avenue to the human heart, has explored another secret haunt and nook of nature, 'sacred to verse, and sure of everlasting fame.' Compared with his lines, Lord Byron's stanzas are but exaggerated common-place, and Walter Scott's poetry (not his prose) old wives' fables. There is no one in whom I have been more disappointed than in the writer here spoken of, nor with whom I am more disposed on certain points to quarrel; but the love of truth and justice which obliges me to do this, will not suffer me to blemish his merits. Do what he can, he cannot help being an original-minded man. His poetry is not servile. While the cuckoo returns in the spring, while the daisy looks bright in the sun, while the rainbow lifts its head above the storm—

Yet I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And all that thou hast done for me !

W. HAZLITT. *On Genius and Common Sense.*

Hazlitt wrote so much about Wordsworth, and repeated himself so often, that I have taken above what I consider his best general survey of the poet's genius and omitted much (his views on The Excursion for example) that I should have liked to include had there been room. The following, however, is of interest as dealing with the poet's personal appearance and manner.

MR. WORDSWORTH, in his person, is above the middle size, with marked features and an air somewhat stately and quixotic. He reminds me of some of Holbein's heads: grave, saturnine, with a slight indication of sly humour, kept under by the manners of the age or by the pretensions of the person. He has a peculiar sweetness in his smile, and great depth and

manliness and a rugged harmony in the tones of his voice. His manner of reading his own poetry is particularly imposing; and in his favourite passages his eye beams with preternatural lustre, and the meaning labours slowly up from his swelling breast. No one who has seen him at these moments could go away with an impression that he was a 'man of no mark or likelihood.' Perhaps the comment of his face and voice is necessary to convey a full idea of his poetry. His language may not be intelligible; but his manner is not to be mistaken. It is clear that he is either mad or inspired. In company, even in a *tête-à-tête*, Mr Wordsworth is often silent, indolent, and reserved. If he is become verbose and oracular of later years, he was not so in his better days. He threw out a bold or an indifferent remark without either effort or pretension, and relapsed into musing again. He shone most (because he seemed most roused and animated) in reciting his own poetry, or in talking about it. . . .

W. HAZLITT. *The Spirit of the Age.*

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

1772-1834



S T Coleridge

AUTHOR OF "CHRISTABEL."

S A M U E L T A Y L O R C O L E R I D G E

1772-1834

son of a Devonshire clergyman, Coleridge was educated at Christ's Hospital (where he remained for eight years) and at Jesus, Cambridge. During his stay there he paid his addresses to a Miss Mary Evans and, finding himself rejected, enlisted forthwith in Elliot's Light Dragoons under the name (which he selected as being sufficiently outlandish) of Silas Tomken Cumberbatch.¹ After his discharge was procured, by the intervention of his brother, who was a captain in the service, he returned to Jesus for a short time, but left in 1794 without taking a degree. Then came his first meeting with Southey at Bristol, and the "Pantisocratic" scheme which was to be carried out on the banks of the Susquehanna, but was stifled thus early by lack of funds.

Coleridge and Southey married sisters, within a few weeks of each other, and the Coleridge couple took up their residence first at Clevedon, the poet beginning to lecture on political and religious subjects at Bristol. Cottle, that so amiable Bristol bookseller, published his first volume of poems in 1796. The year before he had met Wordsworth for the first time, and in 1798 the first volume of "Lyrical Ballads", the joint work of the two friends, was brought out by the faithful Cottle. His next change was to Göttingen in Germany, where he acquired a knowledge of the language and of German philosophy in general that had a marked effect on his career. His translation of "Wallenstein", said to have been finished in six weeks, was published soon after his return to England. In 1800 he went to the Lakes, and in 1803 took up his residence with Southey at Greta Hall, Keswick. It was about this time that he first began to sink under the influence of opium, and after struggling against the habit for the next thirteen years he at length

¹ The name is variously given by the authorities. De Quincey, who is perhaps the least to be trusted, writes Silas Titus Comberback—but all agree in making the initials correspond with Coleridge's own. Writing to Captain Coleridge in connection with his discharge, Coleridge himself gives the name as Silas Tomkyn Comberbacke, 15th, or King's Regiment of Light Dragoons, G Troop.

entered the family of Mr. James Gillman, of Highgate, who watched over him with great care until the close of his life.

Lamb wrote to Wordsworth on April 26, 1816:

He is, at present, under the medical care of a Mr. Gillman (Killman?), a Highgate apothecary, where he plays at leaving off laud . . . m. I think his essentials not touched: he is very bad; but then he wonderfully picks up another day, and his face, when he repeats his verses, hath its ancient glory; an archangel a little damaged. . . .

And an archangel, perhaps more than a little damaged, he remained to the end.

LAMB ON COLERIDGE

Coleridge at Christ's Hospital.

COME back into memory, like as thou wert in the day-spring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned—Samuel Taylor Coleridge—Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!—How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters stand still, intranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young Mirandula), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jam-blichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar—while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity-boy!*—many were the “wit-combats,” (to dally awhile with the words of old Fuller), between him and C. V. Le G_____, “which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon, and an English man of war; Master Coleridge, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances. C.V.L., with the English man of war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention.”

LAMB. *Essays of Elia.*

HAZLITT ON COLERIDGE

Hazlitt's First Meeting with Coleridge.

IT was in January of 1798 that I rose one morning before daylight, to walk ten miles in the mud, to hear this celebrated person preach. Never, the longest day I have to live, shall I have such another walk as this cold, raw, comfortless one, in the winter of the year 1798. . . . When I got there, the organ was playing the 100th Psalm, and when it was done, Mr. Coleridge rose and gave out his text: "And he went up into the mountain to pray, HIMSELF, ALONE." As he gave out this text, his voice "rose like a steam of rich, distilled perfumes;" and when he came to the last two words, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe. . . .

Seen at close quarters.

ON the Tuesday following, the half-inspired speaker came. I was called down into the room where he was, and went half-hoping, half-afraid. . . . His appearance was different from what I had anticipated from seeing him before. At a distance, and in the dim light of the chapel, there was to me a strange wildness in his aspect, a dusky obscurity, and I thought him pitted with the smallpox. His complexion was at that time clear, and even bright—

"As are the children of yon azure sheen."

His forehead was broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and his eyes rolling beneath them, like a sea with darkened lustre. "A certain tender bloom his face o'erspread," a purple tinge as we see it in the pale, thoughtful complexions of the Spanish portrait-painters, Murillo and Velasquez. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin good-humoured and round; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing—like what he has done. It might seem that the genius of his face as from a height surveyed and projected him (with

sufficient capacity and huge aspiration) into the world unknown of thought and imagination, with nothing to support or guide his veering purpose, as if Columbus had launched his adventurous course for the New World in a scallop, without oars or compass. So, at least, I comment on it after the event. Coleridge, in his person, was rather above the common size, inclining to the corpulent, or, like Lord Hamlet, "somewhat fat and pursy." His hair, (now, alas! grey) was then black and glossy as the raven's, and fell in smooth masses over his forehead. This long pendulous hair is peculiar to enthusiasts, to those whose minds tend heavenward; and is traditionally inseparable (though of a different colour) from the pictures of Christ.

HAZLITT. *My First Acquaintance with Poets.*

DE QUINCEY ON COLERIDGE

De Quincey meets Coleridge for the first time. He was then only twenty-two years of age, while Coleridge was nearly thirty-seven.

I HAD received directions for finding out the house where Coleridge was visiting; and, in riding down a main street of Bridgewater, I noticed a gateway corresponding to the description given me. Under this was standing, and gazing about him, a man whom I will describe. In height he might seem to be about five feet eight (he was, in reality, about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height); his person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically term fair, because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large, and soft in their expression; and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess which mixed with their light that I recognized my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him steadfastly for a minute or more; and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street. He was in a deep reverie; for I had dismounted, made two or three trifling arrangements at an inn-door, and advanced close to him, before he had apparently become conscious of my presence. The sound of my voice, announcing my own name, first awoke him; he started, and for a moment seemed at a loss to understand my purpose or his

own situation; for he repeated rapidly a number of words which had no relation to either of us. There was no *mauvaise honte* in his manner, but simply perplexity, and an apparent difficulty in recovering his position amongst daylight realities. This little scene over, he received me with a kindness of manner so marked that it might be called gracious. . . .

DE QUINCEY. *Literary Reminiscences.*

One of Coleridge's Dissertations.

COLERIDGE led me to a drawing-room, rang the bell for refreshments, and omitted no point of a courteous reception. He told me that there would be a very large dinner party on that day, which, perhaps, might be disagreeable to a perfect stranger; but, if not, he could assure me of a most hospitable welcome from the family. I was too anxious to see him under all aspects to think of declining this invitation. That point being settled, Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellana, or the St. Lawrence, that, having been checked and fretted by rocks or thwarting islands, suddenly recovers its volume of waters and its mighty music, swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought by transitions the most just and logical, that it was possible to conceive. What I mean by saying that his transitions were "just" is by way of contradistinction to that mode of conversation which courts variety through links of *verbal* connexions. Coleridge, to many people, and often I have heard the complaint, seemed to wander; and he seemed then to wander the most when, in fact, his resistance to the wandering spirit was greatest—viz., when the compass and huge circuit by which his illustrations moved travelled farthest into the remote regions before they began to revolve. Long before this coming round commenced most people had lost him, and naturally enough supposed that he had lost himself. They continued to admire the separate beauty of the thoughts, but did not see their relations to the dominant theme. Had the conversation been thrown upon paper, it might have been easy to trace the continuity of the links; just as in Bishop Berkeley's "Siris," from a pedestal so

low and abject, so culinary, as Tar Water, the method of preparing it, and its medicinal effects, the dissertation ascends, like Jacob's ladder, by just gradations, into the Heaven of Heavens and the thrones of the Trinity. But Heaven is there connected with earth by the Homeric chain of gold; and, being subject to steady examination, it is easy to trace the links; whereas, in conversation, the loss of a single word may cause the whole cohesion to disappear from view. However, I can assert, upon my long and intimate knowledge of Coleridge's mind, that logic the most severe was as inalienable from his modes of thinking as grammar from his language.

DE QUINCEY. *Literary Reminiscences.*

De Quincey recalls Coleridge's conversation.

HE gathered into focal concentration the largest body of objects, apparently disconnected, that any man ever yet, by any magic, could assemble, or, having assembled, could manage. His great fault was that, by not opening sufficient spaces for reply, or suggestion, or collateral notice, he not only narrowed his own field, but he grievously injured the final impression. For, when men's minds are purely passive, when they are not allowed to react, then it is that they collapse most, and that their sense of what is said must ever be feeblest. Doubtless there must have been great conversational masters elsewhere, and at many periods; but in this lay Coleridge's characteristic advantage, that he was a great natural power, and also a great artist. He was a power in the art; and he carried a new art into the power.

As from one opium-eater to another.

IT will not follow, because, with a relation to happiness and tranquillity, a man may have found opium his curse, that therefore, as a creature of energies and great purposes, he must have been the wreck which he seems to suppose. Opium gives and takes away. It defeats the steady habit of exertion; but it creates spasms of irregular exertion. It ruins the natural power of life; but it develops preternatural paroxysms of intermitting power.

DE QUINCEY. *Biographies and Biographic Sketches.*

POE ON COLERIDGE

Poe's reverence for Coleridge.

of Coleridge I cannot speak but with reverence. His towering intellect! his gigantic power! He is one more evidence of the fact "que le plupart des sectes ont raison dans une bonne partie de ce qu'elles avancent, mais non pas en ce qu'elles nient." He has imprisoned his own conceptions by the barrier he has erected against those of others. It is lamentable to think that such a mind should be buried in metaphysics, and, like the Nyctanthes, waste its perfume upon the night alone. In reading his poetry, I tremble like one who stands upon a volcano, conscious from the very darkness bursting from the crater, of the fire and light that are weltering below.

EDGAR ALLAN POE. *Essays.*

SAMUEL ROGERS ON COLERIDGE

Coleridge's conversation.

COLERIDGE was a marvellous talker. One morning, when Hookham Frere also breakfasted with me, Coleridge talked for three hours without intermission about poetry, and so admirably, that I wish every word he uttered had been written down.

But sometimes his harangues were quite unintelligible, not only to myself, but to others. Wordsworth and I called upon him one forenoon, when he was in a lodging off Pall Mall. He talked uninterruptedly for about two hours, during which Wordsworth listened to him with profound attention, every now and then nodding his head as if in assent. On quitting the lodging, I said to Wordsworth, "Well, for my own part, I could not make head or tail of Coleridge's oration: pray, did you understand it?" "Not one syllable of it," was Wordsworth's reply.

Southey's kindly word.

SOUTHEY used to say that "the moment anything assumed the shape of a duty, Coleridge felt himself incapable of discharging it."

ROGERS. *Table-Talk.*

SOUTHEY ON COLERIDGE

Southey compares his own method of thought with that of Coleridge. From a letter to Miss Barker, dated Jan. 29, 1810.

IT is not a little extraordinary that Coleridge, who is fond of logic, and who has an actual love and passion for close, hard thinking, should write in so rambling and inconclusive a manner; while I, who am utterly incapable of that toil of thought in which he delights, never fail to express myself perspicuously, and to the point. I owe, perhaps, something of this to the circumstance of having lived with him during that year in my life which was most likely to give my mind its lasting character. Disliking his inordinate love of talking, I was naturally led to avoid the same fault; when we were alone, and he talked his best (which was always at those times), I was pleased to listen; and when we were in company, and I heard the same things repeated,—repeated to every fresh company, seven times in the week if we were in seven parties,—still I was silent, in great measure from depression of spirits at perceiving those vices in his nature which soon appeared to be incurable. When he provoked me into an argument, I made the most of my time; and, as it was not easy to get in more than a few words, took care to make up in weight for what they wanted in measure. His habits have continued, and so have mine. Coleridge requested me to write him such a letter on the faults of the “Friend” as he might insert and reply to. I did so; but it was not inserted, and therefore I am sorry I did not copy it. It described the fault you have remarked as existing in Burke, and having prevented him from ever persuading anybody to his opinions,—for Burke made no proselytes except such as wanted an excuse for professing to change their party. You read his book, you saw what his opinions were; but they were given in such a way, evolving the causes of everything, and involving the consequences, that you never knew from whence he set out, nor where he was going. So it is with C.; he goes to work like a hound, nosing his way, turning, and twisting, and winding, and doubling, till you get weary with following the mazy movements. My way is, when I see my object, to dart at it like a grey-hound.

WARTER. *Letters of Robert Southey.*

KEATS ON COLERIDGE

Keats describes a meeting with Coleridge. From a letter to George and Georgiana Keats, dated April 15, 1819.

LAST Sunday I took a walk towards Highgate and in the lane that winds by the side of Lord Mansfield's park I met Mr. Green our Demonstrator at Guy's in conversation with Coleridge—I joined them, after enquiring by a look whether it would be agreeable—I walked with him at his alderman-after-dinner pace for near two miles I suppose. In those two miles he broached a thousand things—let me see if I can give you a list—Nightingales, Poetry—on Poetical Sensation—Metaphysics—Different genera and species of Dreams—Nightmare—a dream accompanied with a sense of touch—single and double touch—a dream related—First and second consciousness—the difference explained between will and Volition—so many metaphysicians from a want of smoking the second consciousness—Monsters—the Kraken—Mermaids—Southey believes in them—Southey's belief too much diluted—a Ghost story—Good morning—I heard his voice as he came towards me—I heard it as he moved away—I had heard it all the interval—if it may be called so. He was civil enough to ask me to call on him at Highgate. Good night!

JOHN KEATS. *Letters.*

BYRON ON COLERIDGE

His debt to "Christabel."

I HAVE been much taken to task for calling 'Christabel' a wild and singularly original and beautiful poem; and the Reviewers very sagely come to a conclusion therefrom, that I am no judge of the compositions of others. 'Christabel' was the origin of all Scott's metrical tales, and that is no small merit. It was written in 1795, and had a pretty general circulation in the literary world, though it was not published till 1816, and then probably in consequence of my advice. . . .

Some eight or ten lines of 'Christabel' found themselves in 'The Siege of Corinth,' I hardly know how; but I adopted another passage, of greater beauty, as a motto to a little work I need not name, and paraphrased without scruple the same

idea in 'Childe Harold.' I thought it good because I felt it deeply—the best test of poetry. His psychological poem was always a great favourite of mine, and but for me would not have appeared. What perfect harmony of versification!

Spoiled by German metaphysics.

COLERIDGE is like Sosia in 'Amphytrion';—he does not know whether he is himself or not. If he had never gone to Germany, nor spoilt his fine genius by the transcendental philosophy and German metaphysics, nor taken to write lay sermons, he would have made the greatest poet of the day. What poets had we in 1795? Hayley had got a monopoly, such as it was. Coleridge might have been any thing: as it is, he is a thing 'that dreams are made of.'

MEDWIN. *Conversations of Byron.*

Lines on Coleridge.

SHALL gentle Coleridge pass unnoticed here,
To turgid ode and tumid stanza dear?
Though themes of innocence amuse him best
Yet still obscurity's a welcome guest.
If inspiration should her aid refuse
To him who takes a pixy for a muse,
Yet none in lofty numbers can surpass
The bard who soars to elegise an ass.
So well the subject suits his noble mind,
He brays the laureate of the long-ear'd kind.

BYRON. *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.*

LEIGH HUNT ON COLERIDGE

A personal sketch.

MR. LAMB's friend, MR. COLERIDGE, is as little fitted for action as he, but on a different account. His person is of a good height, but as sluggish and solid as the other's is light and fragile. He has, perhaps, suffered it to look old before its time, for want of exercise. His hair, too, is quite white (though he cannot much exceed fifty); and as he generally dresses in black, and has a very tranquil demeanour, his appearance is gentle-

manly, and begins to be reverend. Nevertheless, there is something invincibly young in the look of his face: it is round and fresh-coloured, with agreeable features, and an open, indolent, good-natured mouth. This boy-like expression is very becoming to one who dreams as he did when he was a child, and who passes his life apart from the rest of the world, with a book, and his flowers. His forehead is prodigious,—a great piece of placid marble; and his fine eyes, in which all the activity of his mind seems to concentrate, move under it with a sprightly ease, as if it were pastime to them to carry all that thought.

A mighty intellect in a sensual body.

AND it is pastime. Mr. Hazlitt says, that Mr. Coleridge's genius appears to him like a spirit, all head and wings, eternally floating about in aetherialities. He gives me a different impression. I fancy him a good-natured wizard, very fond of earth, and conscious of reposing with weight enough in his easy chair, but able to conjure his aetherialities about him in the twinkling of an eye. He can also change them by thousands, and dismiss them as easily when his dinner comes. It is a mighty intellect put upon a sensual body; and the reason why he does little more with it than talk and dream, is that it is agreeable to such a body to do little else. I do not mean that Mr. Coleridge is a sensualist in an ill sense. He is capable of too many innocent pleasures, to take any pleasure in the way that a man of the world would take it. The idlest things he did would have a warrant. But if all the senses, in their time, have not found lodging in that humane plenitude of his, never believe that they did in Thomson or in Boccaccio. Two affirmatives in him make a negative. He is very metaphysical and very corporeal; and he does nothing. His brains plead all sorts of questions before him, and he hears them with so much impartiality (his spleen not giving him any trouble), that he thinks he might as well sit in his easy chair and hear them for ever, without coming to a conclusion. It has been said that he took opium to deaden the sharpness of his cogitations. I will undertake to affirm, that if he ever took any thing to deaden a sensation within him, it was for no greater or more marvellous reason than other people take it; which is, because they do not

take enough exercise, and so plague their heads with their livers. Opium, perhaps, might settle an uneasiness of this sort in Mr. Coleridge, as it did in a much less man with a much greater body, the Shadwell of Dryden. He would then resume his natural ease, and sit, and be happy, till the want of exercise must be again supplied.

LEIGH HUNT. *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries.*

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE, 1817, ON COLERIDGE

In the following excerpt, from a review of Coleridge's Biographia Literaria, a writer in Blackwood's Magazine takes occasion to compare Coleridge with other members of the Lake school, and also with Scott, Campbell and Moore.

... WE cannot see in what the state of literature would have been different, had he been cut off in childhood, or had he never been born; for except a few wild and fanciful ballads, he has produced nothing worthy remembrance. Yet, insignificant as he assuredly is, he cannot put pen to paper without a feeling that millions of eyes are fixed upon him; and he scatters his Sibylline Leaves around him, with as majestic an air as if a crowd of enthusiastic admirers were rushing forward to grasp the divine promulgations, instead of their being, as in fact they are, coldly received by the accidental passenger, like a lying lottery puff or a quack advertisement.

Southey's "four noble poems."

THIS most miserable arrogance seems, in the present age, confined almost exclusively to the original members of the Lake school, and is, we think, worthy of especial notice as one of the leading features of their character. It would be difficult to defend it either in Southey or Wordsworth; but in Coleridge it is altogether ridiculous. Southey has undoubtedly written four noble Poems—Thalaba, Madoc, Kehama, and Roderick; and if the Poets of this age are admitted, by the voice of posterity, to take their places by the side of the Mighty of former times in the Temple of Immortality, he will be one of that sacred company. Wordsworth, too, with all his manifold errors and defects, has, we think, won to himself a great name, and, in point of originality, will be considered as

second to no man of this age. They are entitled to think highly of themselves, in comparison with their most highly gifted contemporaries; and therefore, though their arrogance may be offensive, as it often is, it is seldom or ever utterly ridiculous. But Mr. Coleridge stands on much lower ground, and will be known to future times only as a man who overrated and abused his talents—who saw glimpses of that glory which he could not grasp—who presumptuously came forward to officiate as High-Priest at mysteries beyond his ken—and who carried himself as if he had been familiarly admitted into the Penetralia of Nature, when in truth he kept perpetually stumbling at the very Threshold.

Scott's "immeasurable superiority."

THIS absurd self-elevation forms a striking contrast with the dignified deportment of all the other great living Poets. Throughout all the works of Scott, the most original-minded man of this generation of Poets, scarcely a single allusion is made to himself; and then it is with a truly delightful simplicity, as if he were not aware of his immeasurable superiority to the ordinary run of mankind. . . . Since he sung his bold, and wild, and romantic lays, a more religious solemnity breathes from our mouldering Abbeys, and a sterner grandeur frowns over our time-shattered Castles. . . . And if he be, as every heart feels, the author of those noble Prose Works that continue to flash upon the world, to him exclusively belongs the glory of wedding Fiction and History in delighted union, and of embodying in imperishable records the manners, character, soul and spirit of Caledonia; so that, if all her annals were lost, her memory would in those Tales be immortal. His truly is a name that comes to the heart of every Briton with a start of exultation, whether it be heard in the hum of cities or in the solitude of nature. What has Campbell ever obtruded on the Public of his private history? Yet his is a name that will be hallowed for ever in the souls of pure, and aspiring, and devout youth; and to those lofty contemplations in which Poetry lends its aid to Religion, his immortal Muse will impart a more enthusiastic glow, while it blends in one majestic hymn all the noblest feelings which can spring from earth, with all the most glorious hopes that come from the silence of eternity. Byron indeed

speaks of himself often, but his is like the voice of an angel heard crying in the storm or the whirlwind; and we listen in a kind of mysterious dread to the tones of a Being whom we scarcely believe to be kindred to ourselves, while he sounds the depths of our nature, and illuminates them with the lightnings of his genius. And finally, who more gracefully unostentatious than Moore, a Poet who has shed delight, and joy, and rapture, and exultation, through the spirit of an enthusiastic People, and whose name is associated in his native Land with every thing noble and glorious in the cause of Patriotism and Liberty. . . .

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, October, 1817.

EMERSON ON COLERIDGE

Emerson visits England (1833).

FROM London, on the 5th August, I went to Highgate, and wrote a note to Mr. Coleridge, requesting leave to pay my respects to him. It was near noon. Mr. Coleridge sent a verbal message that he was in bed, but if I would call after one o'clock, he would see me. I returned at one, and he appeared, a short, thick old man, with bright blue eyes and fine clear complexion, leaning on his cane. He took snuff freely, which presently soiled his cravat and neat black suit. . . . He spoke of Dr. Channing. It was an unspeakable misfortune that he should have turned out a Unitarian after all. On this, he burst into a declamation on the folly and unreasonableness of Unitarianism —its high unreasonableness; and taking up Bishop Waterland's book, which lay on the table, he read with vehemence two or three pages written by himself on the fly-leaves—passages, too, which, I believe, are printed in the "Aids to Reflection." When he stopped to take breath, I interposed, that "whilst I highly valued all his explanations, I was bound to tell him that I was born and bred a Unitarian." "Yes," he said, "I supposed so;" and continued as before. . . .

Rather a spectacle than a conversation.

I WAS in his company for about an hour, but find it impossible to recall the largest part of his discourse, which was often like so many printed paragraphs in his book—perhaps the same—

so readily did he fall into certain commonplaces. As I might have foreseen, the visit was rather a spectacle than a conversation, of no use beyond the satisfaction of my curiosity. He was old and preoccupied, and could not bend to a new companion and think with him.

R. W. EMERSON. *English Traits.*

CARLYLE ON COLERIDGE

Carlyle is disappointed.

COLERIDGE, a puffy, anxious, obstructed-looking, fattish old man, hobbled about with us, talking with a kind of solemn emphasis on matters which were of no interest (and even reading pieces in proof of his opinions thereon.) I had him to myself once or twice, in various parts of the garden walks, and tried hard to get something about *Kant* and Co. from him, about 'reason' versus 'understanding' and the like, but in vain. Nothing came from him that was of use to me that day, or in fact any day. The sight and sound of a sage who was so venerated by those about me, and whom I too would willingly have venerated, but could not—this was all.

Carlyle's Reminiscences.

Hope Deferred.

to sit as a passive bucket and be pumped into, whether you consent or not, can in the long-run be exhilarating to no creature; how eloquent soever the flood of utterance that is descending. But if it be withal a confused unintelligible flood of utterance, threatening to submerge all known landmarks of thought, and drown the world and you!—I have heard Coleridge talk, with eager musical energy, two stricken hours, his face radiant and moist, and communicate no meaning whatsoever to any individual of his hearers, certain of whom, I for one, still kept eagerly listening in hope. . . . He began anywhere: you put some question to him, made some suggestive observation: instead of directly answering this, or decidedly setting out towards answer of it, he would accumulate formidable apparatus, logical swim-bladders, transcendental life-preservers and other precautionary and vehiculatory gear, for setting out; perhaps did at last get under way, but was swiftly solicited, turned aside by the glance of some radiant new game

on this hand or that, into new courses; and ever into new; and before long into all the Universe, where it was uncertain what game you would catch, or whether any.

Peaks of eloquence.

GLORIOUS islets, too, I have seen rise out of the haze; but they were few, and soon swallowed in the general element again. Balmy sunny islets, islets of the blest and the intelligible. . . . Eloquent artistically expressive words you always had; piercing radiances of a most subtle insight came at intervals; tones of noble pious sympathy, recognisable as pious though strangely coloured, were never wanting long; but in general you could not call this aimless, cloudcapt, cloud-based, lawlessly meandering human discourse of reason by the name of 'excellent talk,' but only of 'surprising'; and were reminded bitterly of Hazlitt's account of it: "Excellent talker, very,—if you let him start from no premises and come to no conclusion."

CARLYLE. *Life of Sterling.*

WORDSWORTH ON COLERIDGE

On Coleridge's conversation.

HE said that the liveliest and truest image he could give of Coleridge's talk was 'that of a majestic river, the sound or sight of whose course you caught at intervals, which was sometimes concealed by forests, sometimes lost in sand, then came flashing out broad and distinct, then again took a turn which your eye could not follow, yet you knew and felt that it was the same river: so,' he said, 'there was always a train, a stream, in Coleridge's discourse, always a connection between its parts in his own mind, though one not always perceptible to the minds of others.'

Poetry spoilt by German influence.

MR. WORDSWORTH went on to say, that in his opinion Coleridge had been spoilt as a poet by going to Germany. The bent of his mind, which was at all times very much to metaphysical theology, had there been fixed in that direction. 'If it had not been for that,' said Wordsworth, 'he would have been the greatest, the most abiding poet of his age. His very faults would have made him popular (meaning his sententiousness and laboured

strain), while he had enough of the essentials of a poet to make him deservedly popular in a higher sense.'

WORDSWORTH. *Prose Works.*

SCOTT ON COLERIDGE

On his indolence.

WERE I ever to take the unbecoming freedom of censuring a man of Mr. Coleridge's extraordinary talents, it would be on account of the caprice and indolence with which he has thrown from him, as in mere wantonness, those unfinished scraps of poetry, which, like the *Torso of antiquity*, defy the skill of his poetical brethren to complete them. The charming fragments which the author abandons to their fate, are surely too valuable to be treated like the proofs of careless engravers, the sweepings of whose studios often make the fortune of some pains-taking collector.

SCOTT. Introduction to *Lay of the Last Minstrel.*

Compared with gaseous coal.

MR. WILSON mentioned a report that Coleridge was engaged on a translation of the *Faust*. "I hope it is so," said Scott: "Coleridge made Schiller's *Wallenstein* far finer than he found it, and so will he do by this. No man has all the resources of poetry in such profusion, but he cannot manage them so as to bring out anything of his own on a large scale at all worthy of his genius. He is like a lump of coal rich with gas, which lies expending itself in puffs and gleams, unless some shrewd body will clap it into a cast-iron box, and compel the compressed element to do itself justice."

LOCKHART. *Life of Scott.*

THOMAS HOOD ON COLERIDGE

A vignette at Colebrooke Cottage.

AMONGST other notable men who came to Colebrooke Cottage, I had twice the good fortune of meeting with S. T. Coleridge. The first time he came from Highgate with Mrs. Gilman, to dine with "Charles and Mary." What a contrast to Lamb was the full-bodied Poet, with his waving, white hair, and his face round, ruddy, and unfurrowed as a holy Friar's! Apropos to which face he gave us a humorous description of an unfinished portrait, that served him for a sort of barometer, to indicate the

state of his popularity. So sure as his name made any temporary stir, out came the canvas on the easel, and a request from the artist for another sitting: down sank the Original in the public notice, and back went the copy into a corner, till some fresh publication or accident again brought forward the Poet; and then forth came the picture for a few more touches. I sincerely hope it has been finished!

Coleridge as a bishop.

WHAT a benign, smiling face it was! What a comfortable, respectable figure! What a model, methought, as I watched and admired the "Old Man eloquent," for a Christian bishop! But he was, perhaps, scarcely orthodox enough to be trusted with a mitre. At least, some of his voluntaries would have frightened a common everyday congregation from their propriety. Amongst other matters of discourse, he came to speak of the strange notions some literal-minded persons form of the joys of Heaven; joys they associated with mere temporal things, in which, for his own part, finding no delight in this world, he could find no bliss hereafter, without a change in his nature, tantamount to the loss of his personal identity. For instance, he said, there are persons who place the whole angelical beatitude in the possession of a pair of wings to flap about with, like "*a sort of celestial poultry.*" After dinner he got up, and began pacing to and fro, with his hands behind his back, talking and walking, as Lamb laughingly hinted, as if qualifying for an itinerant preacher; now fetching a simile from Loddiges' garden, at Hackney; and then flying off for an illustration to the sugar-making in Jamaica. With his fine, flowing voice, it was glorious music, of the "never-ending, still-beginning" kind; and you did not wish it to end. It was rare flying, as in the Nassau Balloon; you knew not whither, nor did you care. Like his own bright-eyed Marinere, he had a spell in his voice that would not let you go. To attempt to describe my own feeling afterward, I had been carried, spiralling, up to heaven by a whirlwind intertwined with sunbeams, giddy and dazzled, but not displeased, and had then been rained down again with a shower of mundane stocks and stones that battered out of me all recollection of what I had heard, and what I had seen!

THOMAS HOOD. *Literary Reminiscences* (from *Hood's Own*).

COWDEN CLARKE¹ ON COLERIDGE*The Ancient Mariner at Ramsgate.*

... I INTRODUCED myself as a friend and admirer of Charles Lamb. This pass-word was sufficient, and I found him immediately talking to me in the bland and frank tones of a standing acquaintance. A poor girl had that morning thrown herself from the pier-head in a pang of despair, from having been betrayed by a villain. He alluded to the event, and went on to denounce the morality of the age that will hound from the community the reputed weaker subject, and continue to receive him who has wronged her. He agreed with me that that question never will be adjusted but by the women themselves. Justice will continue in abeyance so long as they visit with severity the errors of their own sex and tolerate those of ours. He then diverged to the great mysteries of life and death, and branched away to the sublimer question—the immortality of the soul. Here he spread the sail-broad vans of his wonderful imagination, and soared away with an eagle-flight, and with an eagle-eye too, compassing the effulgence of his great argument, ever and anon stooping within my own sparrow's range, and then glancing away again, and careering through the trackless fields of ethereal metaphysics. And thus he continued for an hour and a half, never pausing except to catch his breath (which in the heat of his teeming mind, he did like a schoolboy repeating by rote his task), and gave utterance to some of the grandest thoughts I ever heard from the mouth of man. His ideas, embodied in words of purest eloquence, flew about my ears like drifts of snow. He was like a cataract filling and rushing over my penny-phial capacity. I could only gasp and bow my head in acknowledgment. . . .

COWDEN CLARKE. *Recollections of Writers.*

¹ Charles Cowden Clarke, 1787-1877, was a schoolfellow and friend of Keats, who addressed several poems to him, and an intimate of the Lamb, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt group. He became a partner in the music-publishing business of Novello, marrying Mary Novello a year or two later, and producing jointly with her a quantity of Shakespereana as well as the "*Recollections of Writers*" here quoted. As a popular lecturer he ranked second only to Dickens, and his readings from Shakespeare and other poets were enthusiastically received.

CHARLES LAMB

1775-1834



Yours rather sh. unwell
Ch^t Lamb

THE AUTHOR OF 'ELIA'.

CHARLES LAMB

1775-1834

PROBABLY few English men of letters have been better loved than Charles Lamb. Even his faults leaned, if not to the side of virtue, at all events to that of amiability. He drank too much, let it be admitted: he had also an impediment in his speech—an “inconquerable impediment” which sent him to the desk of an accountant rather than to the University and the pulpit. But to his friends this stammer was an engaging foible rather than a disability: it seemed to provide that slight hesitation before the crucial point of a jest that often is required to attract the attention of the audience and fix the occasion in the memory. It gave, in fact, the necessary suspense. And then, the calamity that overwhelmed the little family in 1796, when he was but just of age, when his sister Mary was suddenly seized with acute mania, stabbing her mother to the heart:—that, and the self-renunciation with which Charles ordered his whole life afterwards for the sake of that sister, provided the element of pathos, and called forth that pity which is akin to love.

He was the prince of letter-writers, in a nonsensical mood; and his essays are, for the most part, but his letters writ large. Looking through his letters to Manning, or to Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, you shall find the germ of many. He was also, perhaps, the best critic of his time. Now and again his judgment may not have been ratified by posterity, but not often. He admired Southey’s work—but then he was his friend, and had been pilloried with him as one of the Lake school, that rascally Jacobin band; and perhaps the work of Southey has been despised too much and too long. But, generally speaking, his appreciation of his contemporaries was sound, while he restored to readers many of the ancients who had been lost for some centuries on dusty library shelves. He would fain have been himself poet and dramatist; but though he tried both he admitted cheerfully that in these spheres he did not reach the highest. It is recorded of him that he joined in hissing his own farce, “Mr. H——”, which ran for a single night at Drury Lane in 1806.

• The name of Elia, which he adopted for his pen-name in his essays (pronounced *Ellia*, as he reminds us in one of his letters) was borrowed from an Italian, a fellow-clerk in the South Sea House, who had left it for some years when the first essays appeared. Lamb adopted the name to hide his own identity, not knowing how his brother, who was still employed there, might like certain descriptions of the place and its inhabitants. The original Elia also happened to be an author, so the deception "passed off pretty well." The appellation of "gentle"—so invariably prefixed to this assumed name—did not altogether please him. As early as 1800 we find him writing to Coleridge, imploring him to abandon the epithet. The meaning of "gentle," he points out, is equivocal at best, and almost always means poor-spirited: he wished to intimate that "his virtues had done sucking." But the adjective has stuck, and will remain now as long as Lamb is read.

Lamb had been educated at Christ's Hospital, where Coleridge preceded and Leigh Hunt followed him. With Thomas Hood he became intimate when that real poet but inveterate punster became a "sort of sub-editor" to the *London Magazine*, on the death of John Scott, the original editor, in 1821. Scott had quarrelled with Lockhart, and was eventually drawn into a duel at Chalk Farm with Lockhart's friend, Christie, which proved fatal to him. During his five years' association with the *London* much of Lamb's best work appeared: in that magazine, and, earlier, in the *Reflector* of Leigh Hunt, are to be found most of the essays by which his name is remembered.

Hunt had not been with him at school, but remembered Lamb coming to revisit the place, "with a pensive, brown, handsome, and kindly face, and a gait advancing with a motion from side to side, between involuntary consciousness and attempted ease." The two became friends in later life. Indeed, almost all his literary contemporaries had an affection for the Lambs. Carlyle was one of the few exceptions—but then the Carlyles came across him in perhaps rather unfortunate circumstances. It was in 1831 that they were asked to stay three or four days at Enfield with Mr. Badams and his wife, and were there visited by Charles Lamb and his sister—"that very sorry pair of phenomena," as Carlyle called them. Charles, as was too often his custom, had more drink than his head

could stand (his head for strong drink was one of the weakest known), and committed the unforgivable offence of dipping his spoon into Mrs. Carlyle's porridge bowl. "He was Cockney to the marrow," said Carlyle, "and applause had turned his head." Unjust—but characteristic!

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE, 1818, ON LAMB

Lamb's early works.

THESE are two very delightful and instructive little volumes. Mr. Lamb is without doubt a man of genius, and of very peculiar genius too; so that we scarcely know of any class of literature to which it could with propriety be said that he belongs. His mind is original even in its errors; and though his ideas often flow on in a somewhat fantastic course, and are shaded with no less fantastic imagery, yet at all times they bubble freshly from the fountain of his own mind, and almost always lead to truth. It is pleasant to know and to feel that we have to do with a man of originality. Much may be learned even from the mistakes of such a writer; he can express more by one happy word than a merely judicious or learned man could in a long dissertation; and the glimpses and flashes which he flings over a subject, shews us more of its bearings than a hundred farthing candles ostentatiously held up by the hands of formal and pragmatical literati.

Mr. Lamb, however, never has been, and we are afraid never will be, a very popular writer. His faults are likely to be very offensive to ordinary readers; while his merits are of so peculiar a kind that it requires a peculiar taste to feel them justly. We are sorry, too, to observe among his admirers persons whose favourable opinion will be apt to prejudice the public against him; and we wish that the editor of the *Examiner* and Mr. Hazlitt had not affected to love and admire that which we are sure they cannot at all understand. Mr. Hunt says, with his usual vulgar affectation, "Charles Lamb, a single one of whose speculations on humanity, unostentatiously scattered about in comments and magazines, is worth all the *half-way-house gabbling* of critics on the establishment;" and Mr. Hazlitt places him, as a critic, far above William Schlegel. The truth is, that Charles Lamb is felt to be a man of genius,

and these two pretenders would fain claim alliance with him. . . .

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Aug., 1818.

HAZLITT ON LAMB

Hazlitt sketches a retiring eccentric.

MR. LAMB does not march boldly along with the crowd, but steals off the pavement to pick his way in the contrary direction. He prefers *byways* to *highways*. When the full tide of human life pours along to some festive show, to some pageant of a day, Elia would stand on one side to look over an old book-stall, or stroll down some deserted pathway in search of a pensive description over a tottering doorway, or some quaint device in architecture, illustrative of embryo art and ancient manners. Mr. Lamb has the very soul of an antiquarian, as this implies a reflecting humanity; the film of the past hovers ever before him. He is shy, sensitive, the reverse of everything coarse, vulgar, obtrusive, and *commonplace*.

The Antiquarian.

MR. LAMB has a distaste to new faces, to new books, to new buildings, to new customs. He is shy of all imposing appearances, of all assumptions of self-importance, of all adventitious ornaments, of all mechanical advantages, even to a nervous excess. It is not merely that he does not rely upon or ordinarily avail himself of them; he holds them in abhorrence; he utterly abjures and discards them, and places a great gulf between him and them. He despises all the vulgar artifices of authorship, all the cant of criticism and helps to notoriety. He has no grand swelling theories to attract the visionary and the enthusiast, no passing topics to allure the thoughtless and the vain. He evades the present; he mocks the future. His affections revert to and settle on the past; but then even this must have something personal and local in it to interest him deeply and thoroughly. He pitches his tent in the suburbs of existing manners, brings down the account of character to the few straggling remains of the last generation, seldom ventures beyond the bills of mortality, and occupies that nice point between egotism and disinterested humanity. No one makes the tour of our southern metropolis, or describes the manners

of the last age, so well as Mr. Lamb; with so fine and formal an air; with such vivid obscurity; with such arch piquancy, such picturesque quaintness, such smiling pathos.

His reading and conversation.

MR. LAMB's taste in books is also fine; and it is peculiar. It is not the worse for a little *idiosyncrasy*. He does not go deep into the Scotch novels; but he is at home in Smollett or Fielding. He is little read in Junius or Gibbon; but no man can give a better account of Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," or Sir Thomas Browne's "Urn-Burial," or Fuller's "Worthies," or John Bunyan's "Holy War." No one is more unimpressible to a specious declamation; no one relishes a recondite beauty more. His admiration of Shakspeare and Milton does not make him despise Pope; and he can read Parnell with patience and Gay with delight. . . . Mr. Lamb excels in familiar conversation almost as much as in writing, when his modesty does not overpower his self-possession. He is as little of a proser as possible; but he *blurts* out the finest wit and sense in the world. He keeps a good deal in the background at first, till some excellent conceit pushes him forward, and then he abounds in whim and pleasantry. There is a primitive simplicity and self-denial about his manners and a Quakerism in his personal appearance, which is, however, relieved by a fine Titian head, full of dumb eloquence.

Mr. Lamb is a general favourite with those who know him. His character is equally singular and amiable. He is endeared to his friends not less by his foibles than his virtues: he ensures their esteem by the one, and does not wound their self-love by the other. He gains ground in the opinion of others by making no advances in his own. We easily admire genius where the diffidence of the possessor makes our acknowledgment of merit seem like a sort of patronage or act of condescension, as we willingly extend our good offices where they are not exacted as obligations or repaid with sullen indifference.

W. HAZLITT. *The Spirit of the Age.*

The Style of Lamb.

MR. LAMB is the only imitator of Old English style I can read with pleasure; and he is so thoroughly imbued with the

spirit of his authors that the idea of imitation is almost done away. There is an inward unction, a marrowy vein, both in the thought and feeling, an intuition, deep and lively, of his subject, that carries off any quaintness or awkwardness arising from an antiquated style and dress. The matter is completely his own, though the manner is assumed. Perhaps his ideas are already so marked and individual as to require their point and pungency to be neutralised by the affectation of a singular but traditional form of conveyance. Tricked out in the prevailing costume, they would probably seem more startling and out of the way. The old English authors, Burton, Fuller, Coryate, Sir Thomas Browne, are a kind of mediators between us and the more eccentric and whimsical modern, reconciling us to his peculiarities. I do not, however, know how far this is the case or not, till he condescends to write like one of us. I must confess that what I like best of his papers under the signature of *Elia* (still I do not presume, amidst such excellence, to decide what is most excellent) is the account of 'Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist,' which is also the most free from obsolete allusions and turns of expression—

A well of native English undefiled.

HAZLITT. *On Familiar Style.*

Evenings with Charles Lamb.

THERE was Lamb himself, the most delightful, the most provoking, the most witty and sensible of men. He always made the best pun, and the best remark in the course of the evening. His serious conversation, like his serious writing, is his best. No one ever stammered out such fine, piquant, deep, eloquent things in half a dozen half-sentences as he does. His jests scald like tears; and he probes a question with a play upon words. What a keen, laughing, hare-brained vein of home-felt truth! What choice venom! How often did we cut into the haunch of letters, while we discussed the haunch of mutton on the table! How we skimmed the cream of criticism! How we got into the heart of controversy! How we picked out the marrow of authors! "And, in our flowing cups, many a good name and true was freshly remembered."

HAZLITT. *The Plain Speaker.*

SOUTHEY ON LAMB

Southey recommends Lamb. From a letter to C. W. W. Wynn, dated Jan. 25, 1823.

READ "Eha," if the book has not fallen in your way. It is by my old friend, Charles Lamb. There are some things in it which will offend, and some which will pain you, as they do me; but you will find in it a rich vein of pure gold.

WARTER. *Letters of Robert Southey.*

In 1830 Moxon published for Lamb a small volume of "Album Verses," which met with a not too favourable review in the Literary Gazette. On which Southey wrote the lines from which the following are taken—

Charles Lamb, to those who know thee justly dear
For rarest genius, and for sterling worth,
Unchanging friendship, warmth of heart sincere,
And wit that never gave an ill thought birth,
Nor ever in its sport infix'd a sting;
To us who have admired and loved thee long,
It is a proud as well as pleasant thing
To hear thy good report, now borne along
Upon the honest breath of public praise:
We know that with the elder sons of song,
In honouring whom thou hast delighted still,
Thy name shall keep its course to after days.

MOORE ON LAMB

Moore's impression of Charles Lamb. From his diary, dated April 4, 1823.

DINED at Mr. Monkhouse's (a gentleman I had never seen before), on Wordsworth's invitation, who lives there whenever he comes to town. A singular party: Coleridge, Rogers, Wordsworth and wife, Charles Lamb (the hero, at present, of the "London Magazine") and his sister (the poor woman who went mad with him in the diligence on the way to Paris), and a Mr. Robinson, one of the *minora sidera* of this constellation of the Lakes, the host himself, a Maecenas of the school, contributing nothing but good dinners and silence. Charles Lamb, a clever fellow certainly; but full of villainous and

abortive puns, which he miscarries of every minute. Some excellent things, however, have come from him; and his friend Robinson mentioned to me not a bad one. On Robinson's receiving his first brief, he called upon Lamb to tell him of it. "I suppose," said Lamb, "you addressed that line of Milton's to it, 'Thou first best cause, least understood.' "

THOMAS MOORE. *Memoirs, etc.*

COWDEN CLARKE ON LAMB

Lamb's kindness to animals.

As an instance of Charles Lamb's sympathy with dumb beasts, his two friends here named¹ once saw him get up from table, while they were dining with him and his sister at Enfield, open the street-door, and give admittance to a stray donkey into the front strip of garden, where there was a grass-plot, which he said seemed to possess more attraction for the creature than the short turf of the common on Chase-side, opposite to the house where the Lambs then dwelt. This mixture of the humorous in manner and the sympathetic in feeling always more or less tinged the sayings and doings of beloved Charles Lamb; there was a constant blending of the overtly whimsical expression or act with betrayed inner kindness and even pathos of sentiment. Beneath this sudden opening of his gate to a stray donkey that it might feast on his garden grass while he himself ate his dinner, possibly lurked some stung sense of wanderers unable to get a meal they hungered for when others revelled in plenty,—a kind of pained fancy finding vent in playful deed or speech, that frequently might be traced by those who enjoyed his society.

COWDEN CLARKE. *Recollections of Writers.*

DE QUINCEY ON LAMB

De Quincey adds a note to his biographical sketch of Charles Lamb, published in the North British Review.

... IN these miscellaneous gatherings Lamb said little, except when an opening arose for a pun. And how effectual that sort of small shot was from him, I need not say to anybody who

¹ Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke.

remembers his infirmity of stammering, and his dexterous management of it for purposes of light and shade. He was often able to train the roll of stammers into settling upon the words immediately preceding the effective one; by which means the key-note of the jest or sarcasm, benefiting by the sudden liberation of his embarrassed voice, was delivered with the force of a pistol shot. That stammer was worth an annuity to him as an ally of his wit. Firing under cover of that advantage, he did triple execution: for, in the first place, the distressing sympathy of the hearers with *his* distress of utterance won for him unavoidably the silence of deep attention; and then, whilst he had us all hoaxed into this attitude of mute suspense by an appearance of distress that he perhaps did not really feel, down came a plunging shot into the very thick of us, with ten times the effect it would else have had.

At a dinner party.

LAMB, I remember, as usual, was full of gaiety; and, as usual, he rose too rapidly to the zenith of his gaiety; for he shot upwards like a rocket, and, as usual, people said he was "tipsy." To me, Lamb never seemed intoxicated, but at most joyously elevated. He never talked nonsense,—which is a great point gained; nor polemically,—which is a greater, for it is a dreadful thing to find a drunken man bent upon converting one's-self; nor sentimentally,—which is greatest of all. You can stand a man's fraternizing with you; or, if he swears an eternal friendship only once in an hour, you do not think of calling in the police; but once in every three minutes is too much. Lamb did none of these things; he was always rational, quiet, and gentlemanly in his habits.

Jesting to liberate the spirit.

THE mercurialities of Lamb were infinite, and always uttered in a spirit of absolute recklessness for the quality or the prosperity of the sally. It seemed to liberate his spirits from some burthen of blackest melancholy which oppressed it, when he had thrown off a jest: he would not stop one instant to improve it; nor did he care the value of a straw whether it were good enough to be remembered, or so mediocre as to extort high moral indignation from a collector who refused to receive into

his collection of jests and puns any that were not felicitously good or revoltingly bad.

DE QUINCEY. *Biographies and Biographic Sketches.*

The musical element in writing affected De Quincey very strongly. It was this which had drawn him to Coleridge: and this was the one thing that he failed to find in Lamb and his writings. This he himself put on record:

THE sense of music as a pleasurable sense, or as any sense at all other than of certain unmeaning and impertinent differences in respect to high and low, sharp or flat, was utterly obliterated as with a sponge by nature herself from Lamb's organisation. Rhythm or pomp of cadence, or sonorous ascent of clauses, in the structure of sentences, were effects of art as much thrown away on *him* as the voice of the charmer upon the deaf adder. We ourselves, occupying the very station of polar opposition to that of Lamb, being as morbidly perhaps in the one excess as he in the other, naturally detected this omission in Lamb's nature at an early stage of our acquaintance.

H. A. PAGE. *De Quincey's Life and Writings.*

HOOD ON LAMB

A personal sketch by Thomas Hood.

... THE door opened, and in came a stranger,—a figure remarkable at a glance, with a fine head, on a small spare body, supported by two almost immaterial legs. He was clothed in sables, of a by-gone fashion, but there was something wanting, or something present about him, that certified he was neither a divine, nor a physician, nor a schoolmaster: from a certain neatness and sobriety in his dress, coupled with his sedate bearing, he might have been taken, but that such a costume would be anomalous, for a *Quaker* in black. He looked still more like (what he really was) a literary Modern Antique, a New-Old Author, a living Anachronism, contemporary at once with Burton the Elder, and Colman the Younger. Meanwhile he advanced with rather a peculiar gait, his walk was plantigrade, and with a cheerful "How d'ye," and one of the blandest, sweetest smiles that ever brightened a manly countenance,

held out two fingers to the Editor. . . . It was a striking intellectual face, full of wiry lines, physiognomical quips and cranks, that gave it great character. There was much earnestness about the brows, and a deal of speculation in the eyes, which were brown and bright, and "quick in turning;" the nose, a decided one, though of no established order; and there was a handsome smartness about the mouth. Altogether it was no common face—none of those *willow-pattern* ones, which Nature turns out by thousands at her potteries;—but more like a chance specimen of the Chinese ware, one to the set—unique, antique, quaint. . . .

THOMAS HOOD. *Literary Reminiscences* (from *Hood's Own*).

LEIGH HUNT ON LAMB

An appreciation.

CHARLES LAMB had a head worthy of Aristotle, with as fine a heart as ever beat in human bosom, and limbs very fragile to sustain it. . . . There never was a true portrait of Lamb. His features were strongly yet delicately cut: he had a fine eye as well as forehead; and no face carried in it greater marks of thought and feeling. It resembled that of Bacon, with less worldly vigour and more sensibility.

As his frame, so was his genius. It was as fit for thought as could be, and equally as unfit for action; and this rendered him melancholy, apprehensive, humorous, and willing to make the best of everything as it was, both from tenderness of heart and abhorrence of alteration. His understanding was too great to admit an absurdity; his frame was not strong enough to deliver it from a fear. His sensibility to strong contrasts was the foundation of his humour, which was that of a wit at once melancholy and willing to be pleased. . . .

LEIGH HUNT. *Autobiography*.

CARLYLE ON LAMB

Three opinions by Thomas Carlyle.

HE was the *leanest* of mankind, tiny black breeches buttoned to the kneecap and no further, surmounting spindle legs also in black, face and head fineish, black, bony, lean, and of a Jew type rather; in the eyes a kind of *smoky* brightness or confused

sharpness; spoke with a stutter; in walking tottered and shuffled; emblem of imbecility bodily and spiritual, and yet something too of humane, ingenuous, pathetic, sportfully much-enduring.

WILSON. *Carlyle to the French Revolution.*

LAMB had no practical sense in him, and in conversation was accustomed to turn into quips and jests whatever turned up—an ill example to younger men, who had to live their lives in a world which was altogether serious, and where it behoved them to consider their position in a spirit quite other than jocose; for a wrong path led to the Nether Darkness.

GAVAN DUFFY. *Conversations with Carlyle.*

At the Montagus'.

A CONFUSED dim miscellany of “geniuses” (mostly nondescript and harmlessly useless) hovered about the establishment; I think those of any reality had tired and gone away. There was much talk and laud of Charles Lamb and his Pepe, etc., but he never appeared. At his own house I saw him once; once I gradually felt to have been enough for me. Poor Lamb! such a ‘divine genius’ you could find in the London world only.

CARLYLE. *Reminiscences.*

N. P. WILLIS ON LAMB

INVITED to breakfast with a gentleman in the Temple to meet Charles Lamb and his sister—‘Elia’ and ‘Bridget Elia.’ I never in my life had an invitation more to my taste. The essays of Elia are certainly the most charming things in the world, and it has been for the last ten years my highest compliment to the literary taste of a friend to present him with a copy. Who has not smiled over the humorous description of ‘Mrs. Battle? Who that has read ‘Elia’ would not give more to see him than all the other authors of his time put together?

I arrived a half hour before Lamb, and had time to learn some of his peculiarities. He lives a little out of London, and is something of an invalid. Some family circumstances have tended to depress him considerably of late years, and, unless excited by convivial intercourse, he scarce shows a trace of what he was. . . .

There was a rap at the door at last, and enter a gentleman in black small-clothes and gaiters, short and very slight in his person, his head set on his shoulders with a thoughtful, forward bent, his hair just sprinkled with gray, a beautiful deep-set eye, aquiline nose, and a very indescribable mouth. Whether it expressed most humour or feeling, good-nature or a kind of whimsical peevishness, or twenty other things which passed over it by turns, I cannot in the least be certain.

His sister, whose literary reputation is associated very closely with her brother's, and who, as the original of 'Bridget Elia,' is a kind of object for literary affection, came in after him. She has a small bent figure, evidently a victim to ill-health, and hears with difficulty. Her face has been, I should think, a fine and handsome one, and her bright gray eye is still full of intelligence and fire. They both seemed quite at home in our friend's chambers; and as there was to be no one else, we immediately drew round the breakfast-table. I had set a large arm-chair for Miss Lamb. "Don't take it, Mary," said Lamb, pulling it away from her very gravely, "it looks as though you were going to have a tooth drawn."

Lamb ate nothing, and complained in a querulous tone of the veal-pie. There was a kind of potted fish (of which I forgot the name at this moment) which he had expected our friend would procure for him. He inquired whether there was not a morsel left perhaps in the bottom of the last pot. Mr. R. was not sure.

"Send and see," said Lamb, "and if the pot has been cleaned, bring me the cover. I think the sight of it would do me good."

The cover was brought, upon which there was a picture of the fish. Lamb kissed it with a reproachful look at his friend, and then left the table and began to wander round the room with a broken, uncertain step, as if he almost forgot to put one leg before the other. His sister rose after a while, and commenced walking up and down very much in the same manner on the opposite side of the table, and in the course of half an hour they took their leave.

N. P. WILLIS. *Pencillings by the Way.*

JOHN FORSTER¹ ON LAMB

This account of Lamb is taken from John Forster's biographical memoir, written soon after his death.

MR. LAMB'S personal appearance was remarkable. It quite realized the expectations of those who think that an author and a wit should have a distinct air, a separate costume, a particular cloth, something positive and singular about him. Such unquestionably had Mr. Lamb. Once he rejoiced in snuff-colour, but latterly his costume was inveterately black—with gaiters which seemed longing for something more substantial to close in. His legs were remarkably slight,—so indeed was the whole body, which was of short stature, but surmounted by a head of amazing fineness. We never saw any other that approached it in its intellectual cast and formation. Such only may be seen occasionally in the finer portraits of Titian. His face was deeply marked and full of noble lines—traces of sensibility, imagination, suffering, and much thought. His wit was in his eye, luminous, quick, and restless. The smile that played about his mouth was ever cordial and good-humoured; and the most cordial and delightful of its smiles were those with which he accompanied his affectionate talk with his sister, or his jokes against her.

FITZGERALD. *Life, Letters and Writings of Charles Lamb.*

¹ John Forster, 1812-1876, journalist, historian and biographer, contributed to almost every literary journal of the period, and was an associate of Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Douglas Jerrold and Dickens, by whose biography he is chiefly known. He bequeathed his library of 18,000 books to the Nation (The Forster Collection now at the South Kensington Museum), including a first folio Shakespeare and almost all the original MSS. of Dickens's novels.

WILLIAM HAZLITT

1778-1830

WILLIAM HAZLITT

1778-1830

HAZLITT's father was a Unitarian minister—a fact which was probably not without effect on his career—for it led to the young man going to Shrewsbury from his father's home at Wem in Shropshire in order to listen to a sermon from S. T. Coleridge. He walked there through some ten miles of mud; and his recollections of what he heard, and of Coleridge's visit to Wem afterwards, are to be found set forth in "My First Acquaintance with Poets." The two became friends, in spite of the six years' difference in age—in early life six years make a lot of difference—and Coleridge encouraged Hazlitt to write. "An Essay on the Principles of Human Action" was the work he set himself to compose; and he afterwards confessed that this was "the only thing he ever piqued himself on writing." It was not published until 1805, eight years after the meeting with Coleridge, and although it was highly praised by some critics, including Sir James Mackintosh, who pronounced it "a work of great ability," the sale was not sufficient to bring in any revenue.

At one time Hazlitt appears to have thought of entering the Unitarian ministry, but the idea was abandoned. He had some leaning towards portrait painting, and his brother John, who was established as a painter of miniatures in London, proposed that he should share his lodgings and adopt the same profession. It was while on this London visit that he met Charles Lamb, whose portrait as a Venetian senator (now in the National Portrait Gallery) was the last of his paintings. He also began a portrait of Wordsworth, but was dissatisfied and destroyed it. According to De Quincey, he fell in love about this time with the poet's sister Dorothy. But it was a Miss Stoddart whom he eventually married, in 1808, and for a time the couple settled at Winterslow, in Wiltshire, moving after some three years to London, where they occupied a house in Westminster (No. 19 York Street), said by tradition to have once belonged to Milton. His married life was not entirely a success. His wife was of an excellent disposition, but without the slightest

turn for household economy: fond of finery, but with very poor taste: intelligent and well informed, but destitute of sympathy. And Hazlitt himself was shy, proud, and irritable. He quarrelled by degrees with most of his old friends. The Lake group he considered to have apostasised from the sacred cause of reform.

About 1822 he became the subject of the singular infatuation which he has described in the "Liber Amoris". A more or less friendly divorce was secured at Edinburgh; but Hazlitt did not take advantage of this to marry the girl—a Miss Sarah Walker, daughter of the lodging-house keeper with whom he lived. Instead, he astonished everyone by making a second marriage with a lady named Bridgwater, whose acquaintance he had made by chance while travelling in a coach. She appears to have possessed a certain amount of property, but after supporting Hazlitt for a year she seems to have decided that she had done enough, and left him for ever. Towards the close he suffered from financial troubles and disappointments, but he lived to see the deposition of Charles X and the final overthrow of the Bourbons. His last words were, "Well, I've had a happy life." Jeffrey sent him £50, in answer to a last appeal for help, but the money did not arrive until after the end.

P. G. PATMORE¹ ON HAZLITT

Hazlitt's personal appearance.

FOR depth, force, and variety of intellectual expression, a finer head and face than Hazlitt's were never seen. I speak of them when his countenance was not dimmed and obscured by illness, or clouded and deformed by those fearful indications of internal passion which he never even attempted to conceal. The expression of his face, when anything was said that seriously offended him, or when any peculiarly painful recollection passed across his mind, was truly awful—more so than can be conceived as within the capacity of the human countenance; except perhaps by those who have witnessed Edmund Kean's last scene of *Sir*

¹ P. G. Patmore, 1786–1858, was an industrious journalist now only remembered as the father of Coventry Patmore, but his volumes of parodies and reminiscences attracted the unfavourable attention of the pundits of the *Athenaeum* and the *North British Review*, who attacked them on the grounds of levity and inconsequence.

Giles Overreach from the front of the pit. But when he was in good health, and in a tolerable humour with himself and the world, his face was more truly and entirely answerable to the intellect that spoke through it than any other I ever saw, either in life or on canvas; and its crowning portion, the brow and forehead, was to my thinking, quite unequalled for mingled capacity and beauty. . . . The forehead, as I have hinted, was magnificent; the nose precisely that (combining strength with lightness and elegance) which physiognomists have assigned as evidence of a fine and highly cultivated taste; though there was a peculiar character about the nostrils, like that observable in those of a fiery and unruly horse. The mouth, from its ever-changing form and character, could scarcely be described except as to its astonishingly varied power of expression, which was equal to, and greatly resembled, that of Edmund Kean.

Strange and ungainly manner.

YET all these advantages were worse than thrown away, by the strange and ungainly manner that at times accompanied them. Hazlitt entered a room as if he had been brought back to it in custody; he shuffled sidelong to the nearest chair, sat himself down upon one corner of it, dropped his hat and his eyes upon the floor, and, after having exhausted his stock of conventional small-talk in the words, "It's a fine day" (whether it was so or not), seemed to resign himself moodily to his fate. And if the talk did not take a turn that roused or pleased him, thus he would sit, silent and half-absorbed, for half an hour or half a minute, as the case might be, and then get up suddenly, with a "Well, good morning," shuffle back to the door, and blunder his way out, audibly muttering curses on his folly, for willingly putting himself in the way of becoming the laughing-stock of—the servants! for it was of *that* class and intellectual grade of persons that Hazlitt alone stood in awe.

P. G. PATMORE. *My Friends and Acquaintances.*

H. CRABB ROBINSON ON HAZLITT

Crabb Robinson gives his first impression of Hazlitt, with whom he had a difference subsequently owing to a criticism of Wordsworth's poems which he considered too severe.

ANOTHER interesting acquaintance I made at this period was with William Hazlitt—a man who has left a deservedly high reputation as a critic; but at the time I first knew him he was struggling against a great difficulty of expression, which rendered him by no means a general favourite in society. His bashfulness, want of words, slovenliness of dress, etc., made him sometimes the object of ridicule.

Diary, etc., of H. Crabb Robinson, 1799.

DE QUINCEY ON HAZLITT

De Quincey examines Hazlitt's claims to deep thought, and to eloquence.

HAZLITT . . . is styled "the great thinker." But, had he even been such potentially, there was an absolute bar to his achievement of that station in act and consummation. No man *can* be a great thinker in our days upon large and elaborate questions without being also a great student. To think profoundly, it is indispensable that a man should have read down to his own starting-point, and have read as a collating student to the particular stage at which he himself takes up the subject. . . . Hazlitt had read nothing. Unacquainted with Grecian philosophy, with Scholastic philosophy, and with the recompensation of those philosophies in the looms of Germany during the last seventy and odd years, trusting merely to the untrained instincts of keen mother-wit—whence should Hazlitt have had the materials for great thinking? It is through the collation of many abortive voyages to polar regions that a man gains his first chance of entering the polar basin, or of running ahead on the true line of approach to it.

A "non-sequacious" talker.

HAZLITT was not eloquent, because he was discontinuous. No man can be eloquent whose thoughts are abrupt, insulated, capricious, and (to borrow an impressive word from Coleridge) non-sequacious. Eloquence resides not in separate or fractional ideas, but in the relation of manifold ideas, and in the mode of their evolution from each other. It is not indeed enough that the ideas should be many, and their relations coherent; the

main condition lies in the *key* of the evolution, in the *law* of the succession. The elements are nothing without the atmosphere that moulds, and the dynamic forces that combine. Now Hazlitt's brilliancy is seen chiefly in separate splinterings of phrase or image which throw upon the eye a vitreous scintillation for a moment, but spread no deep suffusions of colour, and distribute no masses of mighty shadow. A flash, a solitary flash, and all is gone. Rhetoric, according to its quality, stands in many degrees of relation to the permanencies of truth; and all rhetoric, like all flesh, is partly unreal, and the glory of both is fleeting. Even the mighty rhetoric of Sir Thomas Browne, or Jeremy Taylor, to whom only it has been granted to open the trumpet-stop on that great organ of passion, oftentimes leaves behind it the sense of sadness which belongs to beautiful apparitions starting out of darkness upon the morbid eye, only to be reclaimed by darkness in the instant of their birth, or which belongs to pageantries in the clouds. But, if all rhetoric is a mode of pyrotechny, and all pyrotechnies are by necessity fugitive, yet even in these frail pomps there are many degrees of frailty. Some fireworks require an hour's duration for the expansion of their glory; others, as if formed from fulminating powder, expire in the very act of birth. Precisely on that scale of duration and of power stand the glitterings of rhetoric that are not worked into the texture, but washed on from the outside. Hazlitt's thoughts were of the same fractured and discontinuous order as his illustrative images—seldom or never self-diffusive; and that is a sufficient argument that he had never cultivated philosophic thinking.

DE QUINCEY. *Biographies and Biographic Sketches.*

QUARTERLY REVIEW, 1818, ON HAZLITT

Hazlitt was not too well treated by the Scottish reviewers, but the Quarterly was even more unscrupulous in its attacks, and undoubtedly had for some time a serious effect upon his sales and his credit with the publishers in general. Hazlitt retaliated to some effect in his "Letter to William Gifford," published shortly after the review from which the following extracts are taken.

MR. HAZLITT seems to have bound himself, in imitation of Hannibal, to wage everlasting war, not, indeed, against Rome, but

against accurate reasoning, just observation, and precise or even intelligible language. We have traced him in his two former predatory incursions on taste and common sense. He has now taken the field a third time, and with a more hostile aspect than ever. Had he written on any other subject, we should scarcely have thought of watching his movements. But though his book is dull, his theme is pleasing, and interests in spite of the author. As we read we forget Mr. Hazlitt, to think of those concerning whom he writes. In fact, few works of poetical criticism are so deplorably bad, as not to be perused with some degree of pleasure. The remarks may be trite, or paradoxical, or unintelligible; they may be expressed in a vague and inanimate style: but the mind is occasionally awakened and relieved by the recurrence of extracts, in which the powers of taste and genius are displayed.

This is the case with Mr. Hazlitt's book. We are not aware that it contains a single just observation, which has not been expressed by other writers more briefly, more perspicuously, and more elegantly. The passages which he has quoted are, with one or two exceptions, familiar to all who have the slightest acquaintance with English literature. His remarks on particular quotations are often injudicious; his general reasonings, for the most part, unintelligible. Indeed he seems to think that meaning is a superfluous quality in writing, and that the task of composition is merely an exercise in varying the arrangement of words. In the lately invented optical toy we have a few bits of coloured glass, the images of which are made to present themselves in an endless variety of forms. Mr. Hazlitt's mind appears to be furnished in a similar manner, and to act in a similar way; for its most vigorous operations are limited to throwing a number of pretty picturesque phrases into senseless and fantastic combinations.

“Unmeaning jargon.”

ONE of the secrets of Mr. Hazlitt's composition is to introduce as many words as possible, which he has at any time seen or heard used in connection with that term which makes, for the moment, the principal figure before his imagination. Is he speaking, for instance, of the heavenly bodies—He recollects

that the phrase *square of the distance* often recurs in astronomy, and that in Dr. Chalmers's Discourses a great deal is said about the sun and the stars. Dr. Chalmers's Discourses, and the square of the distance must, therefore, be impressed into his service, without caring whether they are or are not likely to be of the least use. 'There can never be another Jacob's dream. Since that time the heavens have gone farther off and grown astronomical. They have become averse to the imagination; nor will they return to us on the squares of the distances, or in Dr. Chalmers's Discourses.' We really have not a variety of language adequate to do justice to the variety of shapes, in which unmeaning jargon is perpetually coming upon us in this performance. We can therefore only say, what we have said of so many other passages, that we have not the faintest conception of what is meant by *the heavenly bodies returning on the squares of the distances, or in Dr. Chalmers's Discourses*. As to the assertion that there can never be another Jacob's dream, we see no reason why dreams should be scientific; particularly as Mr. Hazlitt's work is a convincing proof, that even the waking thoughts of some men are safe from the encroachments of reason and philosophy.

Quarterly Review, July, 1818.

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD ON HAZLITT

Dated July, 1822. Miss Mitford champions Hazlitt.

OH, no! I did not write the review of Hazlitt, whom, in spite of the whole University of Cambridge, I regard as the first prose writer of the day; so light, and brilliant, and sparkling! so original! and often so true.

I don't agree with him always, to be sure, no one can with any deep thinker, who shows to the very bottom all the nooks and corners of his mind—the byeways and short turnings;—but he is a master spirit, depend on it, and the Cambridge people know that, or they would not be so angry with him. If you have read as many of his books as I have done, you would admire him too.

M. R. MITFORD. *Letters and Life.*

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE, 1818, ON HAZLITT

A testimonial to Hazlitt from Blackwood's Magazine, on the conclusion of his "Lectures on English Poetry," delivered at the Surrey Institution, London.

WE are not apt to imbibe half opinions, or to express them by halves; we shall, therefore, say at once, that when Mr. Hazlitt's taste and judgment are left to themselves, we think him among the best, if not the very best, living critic on our national literature. His sincere and healthful perceptions of truth and beauty, of falsehood and deformity, have a clearness, a depth, and a comprehensiveness, that have rarely been equalled. . . .

As we have not scrupled to declare, that we think Mr. Hazlitt is sometimes the very best living critic, we shall venture one step further, and add, that we think he is sometimes the very worst. One would suppose he had a personal quarrel with all living writers, good, bad, or indifferent. In fact, he seems to know little about them, and to care less. With him, to be alive is not only a fault in itself, but it includes all other possible faults. He seems to consider life as a disease, and death as your only doctor. He reverses the proverb, and thinks a dead ass is better than a living lion. In his eyes death, like charity, "covereth a multitude of sins." In short, if you want his praise, you must die for it; and when such praise is deserved, and given really *con amore*, it is almost worth dying for.

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, April, 1818.

B. W. PROCTER ("BARRY CORNWALL") ON HAZLITT

JUSTICE has never been done, I think, to the great and varied talents of William Hazlitt. The opinion of the dominant party ("public opinion," as it is called) was directed against him during his life, and that opinion has continued to prevail, amongst the unthinking and easy multitude, ever since. . . .

Hazlitt himself had strong passions, and a few prejudices; and his free manifestation of these were adduced as an excuse for the slander and animosity with which he was perpetually assailed. He attacked others, indeed (a few only), and of these he expressed his dislike in terms sometimes too violent perhaps, and at no time to be mistaken. Yet, when an opportunity arose

to require from him an unbiassed opinion, he was always just. He did not carry poisoned arrows into civil conflict.

Hazlitt held those extreme radical opinions which, fifty years since, were upheld by many others; and the warmth of his temper led him to denounce things and systems to which he had a strong aversion. Subject to the faults arising out of this his warm temperament, he possessed qualities worthy of affection and respect. He was a simple, unselfish man, void of all deception and pretence; and he had a clear, acute intellect, when not traversed by some temporary passion or confused by a strong prejudice. . . . He loved the worker better than the idler. He hated pretensions supported merely by rank or wealth or repute, or by the clamour of factions. And he felt love and hatred in an intense degree. But he was never dishonest. He never struck down the weak, nor trod on the prostrate. He was never treacherous, never tyrannical, never cruel.

His essays—their style and matter.

HAZLITT's critical style, in all cases where he does not overwhelm it by elaborate eulogy, is strong, picturesque, and expressive. As a piece of eloquent writing, few passages in literature surpass his "Introduction to the Literature of Elizabeth." Leigh Hunt said, cleverly, that his "criticisms on art threw a light on the subject as from a painted window."

His essays are full of thought; full of delicate perceptions. They do not speak of matters which he has merely seen or remembered, but enter into the rights and wrongs of persons; into the meaning and logic of things; into causes and results; into motives and indications of character. He is, in short, not a *raconteur* but a reasoner. This will be observed in almost all his numerous essays. If he is often ostentatious, that is to say, if he accumulates image upon image, reason upon reason, it is simply that he is more in earnest than other writers.

A personal description.

HAZLITT was of the middle size, with eager, expressive eyes; near which his black hair, sprinkled sparingly with grey, curled round in a wiry, resolute manner. His grey eyes, not remarkable in colour, expanded into great expression when occasion demanded it. Being very shy, however, they often evaded your

steadfast look. They never (as has been asserted by some one) had a sinister expression; but they sometimes flamed with indignant glances, when their owner was moved to anger; like the eyes of other angry men. At home, his style of dress (or undress) was perhaps slovenly, because there was no one to please; but he always presented a very clean and neat appearance when he went abroad. His mode of walking was loose, weak, and unsteady; although his arms displayed strength, which he used to put forth when he played at racquets with Martin Burney and others. He played in the old Fives Court (now pulled down) in St. Martin's Street; and occasionally exhibited impatience when the game went against him. It was here that he witnessed the play at fives of the celebrated John Cavanagh, of whom he has written so delightfully.

He lived mainly alone—the life of a solitary thinker. This gave originality to some of his essays; sometimes it deprived him of the advantage of comparing his opinions with those of others.

There is no doubt that his strong passions and determined likings often interfered with his better reason. His admiration of Napoleon would not allow of any qualification. And in the case of the heroine of the *Liber Amoris* (Sarah Walker), his intellect was completely subdued by an insane passion. He was, for a time, unable to think or talk of anything else. He abandoned criticism and books as idle matters; and fatigued every person whom he met by expressions of his love, of her deceit, and of his own vehement disappointment.

The heroine of the "Liber Amoris."

I used to see this girl (S.W.) at his lodgings in Southampton Buildings, and could not account for the extravagant passion of her admirer. She was the daughter of the lodging-house keeper. Her face was round and small, and her eyes were motionless, glassy, and without any speculation (apparently) in them. Her movements in walking were very remarkable, for I never observed her to make a step. She went onwards in a sort of wavy, sinuous manner, like the movement of a snake. She was silent, or uttered monosyllables only, and was very demure. Her steady unmoving gaze upon the person whom she was

addressing was exceedingly unpleasant. The Germans would have extracted a romance from her, endowing her perhaps with some diabolic attribute.

B. W. PROCTER. *Recollections of Men of Letters.*

CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE ON HAZLITT

IT was our good fortune to see a magnificent copy that Hazlitt made of Titian's portrait of Ippolito dei Medici, when we called upon him at his lodgings one evening. The painting—mere stretched canvas without frame—was standing on an old-fashioned couch in one corner of the room leaning against the wall, and we remained opposite to it for some time, while Hazlitt stood by holding the candle high up so as to throw the light well on to the picture, descanting enthusiastically on the merits of the original. The beam from the candle falling on his own finely intellectual head, with its iron-grey hair, its square potential forehead, its massive mouth and chin, and eyes full of earnest fire, formed a glorious picture in itself, and remains a luminous vision for ever upon our memory. Hazlitt was naturally impetuous, and feeling that he could not attain the supreme height in art to which his imagination soared as the point at which he aimed, and which could alone suffice to realise his ideal of excellence therein, he took up his pen and became an author, with what perfect success every one knows. His facility in composition was extreme. We have seen him continue writing (when we went to see him while he was pressed for time to finish an article) with wonderful ease and rapidity of pen, going on as if writing a mere ordinary letter. His usual manuscript was clear and unblotted, indicating great readiness and sureness in writing, as though requiring no erasures or interlining. He was fond of using large pages of rough paper with ruled lines, such as those of a bought-up blank account-book—as they were. . . .

COWDEN CLARKE. *Recollections of Writers.*

S. C. HALL ON HAZLITT

I DID not like Hazlitt: nobody did. He was out of place at the genial gatherings at Highgate; though he was often there: for genial he certainly was not. He wrote with a pen dipped in gall,

and had a singularly harsh and ungentle look; seeming indeed as if his sole business in life was to seek for faults. He was a leading literary and art critic of his time; but he has left to posterity little either to guide or instruct. I recall him as a small, mean-looking, unprepossessing man; but I do not quite accept Haydon's estimate of him: "A singular compound of malice, candour, cowardice, genius, purity, vice, democracy and conceit." Lamb said of him, that he was, "in his natural state, one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing." I prefer the portrait of De Quincey: "He smiled upon no man!" He was a democrat, a devout admirer of the first Napoleon; and (I again quote De Quincey) "hated even more than enemies those whom custom obliged him to call friends." His was the common lot of critics—few friends, many foes.

s. c. HALL. *Retrospect of a Long Life.*

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

1775-1864

1775-1864

LANDOR was sent to Rugby School, but the then headmaster requested that he should be removed, and he went accordingly to a private tutor before entering at Trinity, Cambridge, in 1793. From Cambridge he was rusticated for a year, having fired a gun at the windows of "a Tory for whom he had an aversion." Though the authorities were willing to overlook this very characteristic act he refused to return. There was a quarrel with his father, but in the end he was permitted to follow his own bent, with an allowance of £150 a year, and he early began to publish poetry. In 1808 at the age of thirty-three he volunteered to serve in the Spanish national army against Napoleon at the head of a regiment which he raised and supported at his own expense. The end of this enterprise came after three months' campaigning, and he returned to England, to write "Count Julian" and to marry a Miss Thuillier.

This, like most of Landor's actions, was sudden and unexpected. He settled, with his newly married wife, at Llanthony Abbey in Monmouthshire, where he spent most of his time in trying to improve the condition of the peasantry and in quarrelling with his more important neighbours. In 1824 he published the first series of his "Imaginary Conversations": in 1835 came his final separation from his wife, and, about the same period, the publication of his three best known prose works—"The Citation of William Shakespeare," "Pericles and Aspasia," and "The Pentameron." In 1847 came "The Hellenics," containing the best of his poetical work, subsequently reissued with alterations that were not always improvements. Legal and domestic troubles combined to keep him exiled in Italy for most of his later years, and it was Robert Browning whose exertions secured for him comparative comfort at the close. He had spent some seventy years in literary activity, and critics have generally agreed that he ranks among the highest of his epoch as poet and writer of lofty prose. To us of the present day he is perhaps best known from his foibles,

as the “Boythorn” of “Bleak House.” Edward FitzGerald said of him, that he “appeared to judge of pictures as he did of books and men, with a most uncompromising perversity which the phrenologists must explain to us after his death.” Yet he admired most works that have survived.

SOUTHEY ON LANDOR

To John Rickman, Jan. 18, 1809.

LANDOR (Gebir) has a bill coming before Parliament, which will take him to town in four or five weeks. Shall I introduce him to you, on the ground that you may possibly give him information which may save him some trouble? You will thus see one of the most extraordinary men that it has ever been my fortune to fall in with, and one who would be one of the greatest, if it were possible to tame him. He does more than any of the gods of all my mythologies, for his very words are thunder and lightning,—such is the power and the splendour with which they burst out: but all is perfectly natural; there is no trick about him,—no preaching, no parade, no playing off.

WARTER. *Letters of Robert Southey.*

From a letter to Landor himself, on receipt of “Count Julian.”

MY DEAR LANDOR,

Last night I received “Count Julian,”—a work *sui generis*. No drama to which it can be compared has ever yet been written, and none ever will be, except it be by the same hand. You are the only poet whom it seems to me impossible to imitate. The structure and language of Milton, and the phraseology of Shakespere, though attempted by men immeasurably inferior, may yet be so resembled as infallibly to remind us of the prototype; but in “Gebir,” and still more in this tragedy, you can no more separate the manner from the matter, than you can colour from the rainbow. The form seems incapable of subsisting without the spirit.

Some of the finest passages were new to me. After that exquisite picture of the Spaniards (p. 4), there come two lines which I have not yet comprehended—

“And scatter to the broad bleak blasts of day
The ruins and the phantoms that replied!”

Julian's speech, "All men with human feelings," &c., is above all praise. So, too, is that burst, "Mountains and seas! ye are not separation." In that scene, which is full of beauty throughout, I feel now of what importance it is for a poet to have seen his own scenery. But I must not go through the volume in this way . . . I will only mention the description of Julian by Hernando, and the image of the Eagle, which is to my feeling in the highest degree of sublimity. The concluding scenes are greatly improved.

What will be the reception of this drama? I could tell you if the Athenians were to decide. Being what we are, and living in an age when public criticism is upon works of fine literature at the very point of *pessimism*, I can only guess that it will pass silently: that a few persons will admire it with all their heart, and all their soul, and all their strength; but that envy and her companions in the Litany will not hear enough of it to induce them to blow their trumpets and abuse it into notoriety.

WARTER. *Letters of Robert Southey.*

This is from a note appended to a quotation from one of Landor's Latin essays—De Cultu atque Usu Latini Sermonis—which Southey found occasion to insert in his preface to "A Vision of Judgement."

THIS essay, which is full of fine critical remarks and striking thoughts felicitously expressed, reached me from Pisa, while the proof of the present sheet was before me. Of its author, (the author of *Gebir* and *Count Julian*) I will only say in this place, that, to have obtained his approbation as a poet, and possessed his friendship as a man, will be remembered among the honours of my life, when the petty enmities of this generation will be forgotten, and its ephemeral reputations shall have passed away. SOUTHEY. *Vision of Judgement* (preface).

H. CRABB ROBINSON ON LANDOR

Landor in Florence. The date of this encounter is August 14, 1830.

MET to-day the one man living in Florence whom I was anxious to know. This was Walter Savage Landor, a man of unques-

tionable genius, but very questionable good sense; or, rather, one of those unmanageable men,—

“Blest with huge stores of wit,
Who want as much again to manage it.”

He was a man of florid complexion, with large full eyes, and altogether a *leonine* man, and with a fierceness of tone well suited to his name; his decisions being confident, and on all subjects, whether of taste or life, unqualified; each standing for itself, not caring whether it was in harmony with what had gone before or would follow from the same oracular lips. But why should I trouble myself to describe him? He is painted by a master hand in Dickens's novel, “*Bleak House*,” now in course of publication, where he figures as Mr. Boythorn.

Diary, etc., of H. Crabb Robinson.

EMERSON ON LANDOR

Emerson visits Landor.

ON the 15th May (1833) I dined with Mr. Landor. I found him noble and courteous, living in a cloud of pictures at his Villa Ghirardesca, a fine house commanding a beautiful landscape. I had inferred from his books, or magnified from some anecdote, an impression of Achillean wrath—an untamable petulance. I do not know whether the imputation were just or not, but certainly on this May day his courtesy veiled that haughty mind, and he was the most patient and gentle of hosts. To be sure, he is decided in his opinions, likes to surprise, and is well content to impress, if possible, his English whim upon the immutable past. No great man ever had a great son, if Philip and Alexander be not an exception; and Philip he calls the greater man. In art, he loves the Greeks, and in sculpture, them only. He prefers the Venus to everything else, and, after that, the head of Alexander, in the gallery here. He prefers John of Bologna to Michael Angelo; in painting, Raffaelle; and shares the growing taste for Perugino and the early masters....

Landor is strangely undervalued in England; usually ignored; and sometimes savagely attacked in the Reviews. The criticism may be right, or wrong, and is quickly forgotten;

but year after year the scholar must still go back to Landor for a multitude of elegant sentences—for wisdom, wit, and indignation that are unforgetable.

EMERSON. *English Traits.*

LEIGH HUNT ON LANDOR

Skimpole gives his opinion of Boythorn.

MR. LANDOR, who has long been known to scholars as a Latin poet beyond the elegance of centos, and has lately shown himself one of our most powerful writers of prose, is a man of a vehement nature, with great delicacy of imagination. He is like a stormy mountain pine, that should produce lilies. After indulging the partialities of his friendships and enmities, and trampling on kings and ministers, he shall cool himself, like a Spartan worshipping a moon-beam, in the patient meekness of Lady Jane Grey. I used to think he did wrong in chusing to write Latin verse instead of English. The opinions he has expressed on that subject, in the eloquent treatise appended to his Latin poems, will, I am sure, hardly find a single person to agree with them. But as an individual, working out his own case, I think he was right in giving way to the inspiration of his scholarship. Independent, learned, and leisurely, with a temperament, perhaps, rather than a mind, poetical, he walked among the fields of antiquity, till he beheld the forms of poetry with the eyes of their inhabitants; and it is agreeable, as a variety, among the crowds of ordinary scholars, especially such as affect to think the great modern poets little ones because they are not ancient, to have one who can really fancy and feel with Ovid and Catullus, as well as read them. Mr. Landor has the veneration for all poetry, ancient or modern, that belongs to a scholar who is himself a poet. He loves Chaucer and Spenser, as well as Homer. That he deserves the title, the reader will be convinced on opening his book of "Idyls", where the first thing he encounters will be the charming duel between Cupid and Pan, full of fancy and archness, with a deeper emotion at the end. His "Lyrics," with the exception of a pretty vision about Ceres and her poppies (which is in the spirit of an Idyl), do not appear to me so good: but on the whole, though it is a point on which I am bound to speak with diffidence, he seems to me by far the best Latin poet we possess,

after Milton; more in good taste than the incorrectness and diffuseness of Cowley; and not to be lowered by a comparison with the mimic elegancies of Addison. Vincent Bourne I conceive to be a genuine hand; but I know him only in a piece or two.

The Poet in exile.

MR. LANDOR was educated at Rugby, and became afterwards the friend and favourite pupil of Dr. Parr. With a library, the smallness of which surprised me, and which he must furnish out, when he writes on English subjects, by the help of a rich memory,—he lives, among his paintings and hospitalities, in a style of unostentatious elegance, very becoming a scholar that can afford it. The exile, in which he chuses to continue at present, is as different from that of his friend Ovid, as his *Tristia* would have been had he thought proper to write any. Augustus would certainly have found no whining in him, much less any worship. He has some fine children, with whom he plays like a real schoolboy, being, in truth, as ready to complain of an undue knock, as he is to laugh, shout, and scramble; and his wife (I really do not know whether I ought to take these liberties, but the nature of the book into which I have been beguiled must excuse me, and ladies must take the consequence of being agreeable),—his wife would have made Ovid's loneliness quite another thing, with her face radiant with good humour. Mr. Landor's conversation is lively and unaffected, as full of scholarship or otherwise as you may desire, and dashed now and then with a little superfluous will and vehemence, when he speaks of his likings and dislikes. His laugh is in peals, and climbing: he seems to fetch every fresh one from a higher story. Speaking of the Latin poets of antiquity, I was struck with an observation of his, that Ovid was the best-natured of them all. Horace's perfection that way he doubted. He said, that Ovid had a greater range of pleasurable ideas, and was prepared to do justice to every thing that came in his way. Ovid was fond of noticing his rivals in wit and genius, and has recorded the names of a great number of his friends; whereas Horace seems to confine his eulogies to such as were rich or in fashion, and well received at court.

LEIGH HUNT. *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries.*

LAMB ON LANDOR

A letter from Lamb to Landor, who had sent, by request, some verses for Emma Isola's album. The volume which Lamb sent was probably, according to Canon Ainger, "Satan in Search of a Wife."

April 9, 1832.

DEAR SIR,

Pray accept a little volume. 'Tis a legacy from Elia, you'll see. Silver and gold had he none, but such as he had left he you. I do not know how to thank you for attending to my request about the Album. I thought you would never remember it. Are not you proud and thankful, Emma? Yes; very, both.

(Signed) EMMA ISOLA.

Many things I had to say to you, which there was not time for. One, why should I forget? 'tis for Rose Aylmer, which has a charm I cannot explain. I lived upon it for weeks. Next, I forgot to tell you I knew all your Welsh annoyances, the measureless B.'s. I knew a quarter of a mile of them. Seventeen brothers and sixteen sisters, as they appear to me in memory. There was one of them that used to fix his long legs on my fender, and tell a tale of a shark every night, endless, immortal. How have I grudged the salt-sea ravener not having had his gorge of him! The shortest of the daughters measured five foot eleven without her shoes. Well, some day we may confer about them. But they were tall. . . .

CHARLES LAMB. *Letters.*

DE QUINCEY ON LANDOR

De Quincey receives a presentation copy from Landor.

AT the beginning of my fever I received a present which gave me real pleasure. It was from Walter Savage Landor: his last publication—a volume comprehending all his Latin poems that he wishes to own—and very prettily bound in odorous Russian leather. There is no author from whom I could have been more gratified by such a mark of attention.

Landor! I cannot say how much I was pleased with your Landorian rencontre—so gratifying in connection with the memory (for to you the knowledge of his name will be chiefly a

memory) of a man so illustrious. Of the two opinions which M. mentions as having surprised but pleased her in Landor, one at least is powerfully expressed and illustrated in his English "Conversations:" that, I mean, about Napoleon. It is also repeated with vigorous scorn in his Latin poems.... During my illness, having no books but Mr. Landor's Latin poems, which reached me at its beginning, I read them at times with great interest. It is a pity that so many fine breathings of tenderness and beauty should perish like the melodies of the regal Danish boy, because warbled "in a forgotten tongue." There is one which beautifully commemorates his mother—apparently an interesting creature and of ancient lineage. I collect from it that she was an heiress, who had the pleasure to step in, as a bride, for the critical rescue of the Landor estates and mansion at the moment when else the parties who held a mortgage upon them would have foreclosed. The name *Savage*, as I infer, was derived from her; and I presume from the context that she belonged to the Savages of the Earl of Rivers.

H. A. PAGE. *De Quincey's Life and Writings.*

MOORE ON LANDOR

Moore meets Landor and Carlyle. Date May 22, 1838.

BREAKFASTED at Milnes', and met rather a remarkable party, consisting of Savage Landor and Carlyle (neither of whom I had ever seen before), Robinson, Rogers, and Rice. A good deal of conversation between Robinson and Carlyle about German authors, of whom I knew nothing, nor (from what they paraded of them) felt that I had lost much by my ignorance. Robinson had witnessed the performance of Schiller's "Bride of Messina," with the ancient chorus, but I forget now what he said as to its effects. Savage Landor a very different sort of person from what I had expected to find him; I found in him all the air and laugh of a hearty country gentleman, a *gros rejouï*; and whereas his writings had given me rather a disrelish to the man, I shall take more readily now to his writings from having seen the man.

THOMAS MOORE. *Memoirs, etc.*

CARLYLE AND EMERSON ON LANDOR

Date, April 1, 1840: Carlyle to Emerson.

of Landor I have not got much benefit either. We met first, some four years ago, on Cheyne Walk here: a tall, broad, burly man, with gray hair, and large, fierce-rolling eyes; of the most restless, impetuous vivacity, not to be held in by the most perfect breeding,—expressing itself in high-colored superlatives, indeed in reckless exaggeration, now and then in a dry sharp laugh not of sport but of mockery; a wild man, whom no extent of culture had been able to tame! His intellectual faculty seemed to me to be weak in proportion to his violence of temper: the judgment he gives about anything is more apt to be wrong than right,—as the inward whirlwind shows him this side or the other of the object; and *sides* of an object are all that he sees. He is not an original man; in most cases one but sighs over the spectacle of common-place torn to rags. I find him painful as a writer; like a soul ever promising to take wing into the Aether, yet never doing it, ever splashing web-footed in the terrene mud, and only splashing the worse the more he strives.

...

Date, June 30, 1840. Emerson to Carlyle.

LANDOR can be shorn of all that is false and foolish, and yet leave a great deal for me to admire. Many years ago I have read a hundred fine things in the *Imaginary Conversations*, though I know well the faults of that book, and the *Pericles and Aspasia* within two years has given me delight. I was introduced to the man Landor when I was in Florence, and he was very kind to me in answering a multitude of questions. His speech, I remember, was below his writing. I love the rich variety of his mind, his proud taste, his penetrating glances, and the poetic loftiness of his sentiment, which rises now and then to the meridian, though with the flight, I own, rather of a rocket than an orb, and terminated sometimes by a sudden tumble.

CARLYLE AND EMERSON. *Correspondence.*

CARLYLE ON LANDOR

In 1850, on his way to Cardiff, whither he had been invited by that loyal but rather boring friend, Mr. Redwood, Carlyle spent a night

with Walter Savage Landor, then living apart from his family in Bath.

LANDOR was in his house, in a fine quiet street like a New Town Edinburgh one, waiting for me, attended only by a nice Bologna dog. Dinner not far from ready; his apartments all hung round with queer old Italian pictures; the very doors had pictures on them. Dinner was elaborately simple. The brave Landor forced me to talk far too much, and we did very near a bottle of claret, besides two glasses of sherry; far too much liquor and excitement for a poor fellow like me. However, he was really stirring company: a proud, irascible, trenchant, yet generous, veracious, and very dignified old man; quite a ducal or royal man in the temper of him; reminded me something of old Sterling, except that for Irish blarney you must substitute a fund of Welsh choler. He left me to go smoking along the streets about ten at night, he himself retiring then, having walked me through the Crescent, Park, &c., in the dusk before. Bath is decidedly the prettiest town in all England. Nay, Edinburgh itself, except for the sea and the Grampians, does not equal it. Regular, but by no means formal streets, all clean, all quiet, yet not dead, winding up in picturesque, lively varieties along the face of a large, broad sweep of woody green sandstone hill, with large outlook to the opposite side of the valley; and fine, decent clean people sauntering about it, mostly small country gentry, I was told; 'live here for £1,200 a year,' said Landor.

FROUDE. *Carlyle's Life in London.*

Gavan Duffy and Carlyle converse about Landor.

I SPOKE of Savage Landor. Landor, he said, was a man of real capacity for literary work of some sort, but he had fallen into an extravagant method of stating his opinions, which made any serious acceptance of them altogether impossible. If he encountered anywhere an honest man doing his duty with decent constancy, he straightway announced that here was a phenomenal mortal, a new and authentic emanation of the Deity. This was a sort of talk to which silence was to be preferred. Landor had not come to discern the actual relation of things in the world; very far from it. But there was something

honourable and elevated, too, in his view of the subject when one came to consider it. He was sincere as well as ardent and impetuous, and he was altogether persuaded for the time that the wild fancies he paraded before the world were actual verities. But the personal impression he left on those who casually encountered him was that of a wild creature with fierce eyes and boisterous attitudes, uttering prodigious exaggerations on every topic that turned up, followed by a guffaw of laughter that was not exhilarating; rather otherwise, indeed.

The "Imaginary Conversations."

I SUGGESTED that it was a serious deduction from the "Imaginary Conversations" that they had the dramatic form without the dramatic spirit. He made Romans, Saxons, and Sandwich Islanders talk the same balanced periods, and approached the heart of a subject by the same slow Socratic method. And he sometimes destroyed the illusion of his work by putting sly sarcasms on Pitt or Byron, Napoleon or the Pope, into the mouths of Greeks or Romans, or of Englishmen of quite a different generation.

Yes, he said, even in the windy rollicking *Noctes* of *Blackwood* you met human beings whose sayings belonged to the speaker, and were not to be confounded one with another; but the "Conversations" were all more or less Landor. There were fine touches of character, it must be confessed, in his statesmen and poets which Wilson or Lockhart could not match; astonishing liveliness and vigour, too, and a far wider horizon of human interest.

I inquired whether literature was not merely his pastime, taken up by fits and starts.

He replied that Landor had been drawn into literature by ambition; he found it did not altogether succeed with him; his merits were far from being acknowledged by all mankind; which soured him in dealing with his fellow-creatures.

After a pause he went on. Landor, when he was young, went to Italy, believing that England was too base a place for a man of honour to dwell in; but he soon came to discover that Italy was intrinsically a baser place. For the last ten years he lived near Bath, coming rarely to London, which he professed to hate and despise. He had left his wife in Italy, giving her all

his income except a couple of hundred pounds to get him a daily beefsteak in England. She was not a wise or docile woman, and he could not live with her any longer. He was about to remove his children that they might be properly educated, a task for which he esteemed her in no way fit; but the eldest son snatched up a gun, and declared that he had come to a time of life to form an opinion on this question, and by G — he would shoot any one who attempted to separate his mother and her children—so Landor had to leave them where they were.

SIR CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY. *Conversations with Carlyle.*

S. C. HALL ON LANDOR

W. S. Landor's vicious propensities.

RANKING high among the men of genius to whom the nineteenth century has given fame, his career as a man of letters points a moral indeed, but it is by showing that vicious propensities are sure to produce wretchedness, for his misery was entirely of his own creating; his life was a perpetual wrangle, notwithstanding the advantages he inherited, and might have enjoyed, from the cradle to the grave—his many rich gifts of fortune and of nature. Handsome in his youth, of goodly presence when I knew him in 1836, of great physical as well as intellectual strength, inheriting large property; well, if not nobly, born, with natural faculties of a high order duly trained by an excellent education—these advantages were all rendered not only futile, but positive sources of evil, by a vicious disposition, ruled by a temper that he himself describes as “the worst beyond comparison that ever man was cursed with,” but which he made no effort to guide, restrain, or control.

His appearance at sixty.

HE was at that time sixty years of age, although he did not look so old; his form and features were essentially masculine; he was not tall, but stalwart; of a robust constitution, and was proud even to arrogance of his physical and intellectual strength. He was a man to whom passers-by would have looked back and asked, “Who is that?” His forehead was high, but retreated, showing remarkable absence of the organs of benevolence and veneration. It was a large head, fullest at the

back, where the animal propensities predominate; it was a powerful, but not a good, head, the expression the opposite of genial. In short, physiognomists and phrenologists would have selected it—each to illustrate his theory.

The libel action.

IN 1856 he had to meet a charge of libel; the case was tried at Bristol, in August, 1856. Plaintiff was a clergyman of the Church of England. The alleged "false and malicious libel" was contained in a book called "Dry Sticks Faggoted by Walter Savage Landor," and grossly insulted the wife of the plaintiff. . . . The crime had been largely augmented by several anonymous letters written to the lady by Landor. These were read in court, but they were so disgusting that the newspapers did not publish them.

The *Bath Herald* of the time describes the libel as a "purely diabolical invention," not only "mean, malignant, and venomous," but "utterly without foundation." An article in *The Times* of that day, in reporting the case—the charge against "a nasty old man tottering on the brink of the grave," has this terrible conclusion:

How ineffable the disgrace to a man of Mr. Landor's ability and reputation at the close of a long life to be mixed up with so disgraceful a transaction. A slanderer—and the slanderer of a lady—a writer of anonymous letters, and these letters reeking with the foulest odours of the dirtiest slums—a violator of his pledged word—who is it to whom these words must now be applied?

Who would not weep if Atticus were he?

The verdict awarded to the plaintiff damages of one thousand pounds. It was anticipated, and steps were taken to deprive the plaintiff of the benefit. It is shamefully discreditable to the parties concerned, that a plan was concocted to place the property of Landor beyond seizure for the damages—break up his house in Bath, sell his pictures, and remove him to Italy. All that was done; but the resolute energy of the plaintiff defeated the project. He followed the defendant to Florence, encountered the lion in his lair, served him with a sufficient citation from the High Court of Justice, the thousand pounds

were *per force* paid, and Landor became by his own act a beggar. . . .

s. c. HALL. *Retrospect of a Long Life.*

HARRIET MARTINEAU ON LANDOR

. . . NEVER was anything more of a piece than the mind and life, the surroundings, the utterances and the acts of this wonderfully sane yet thoroughly inconsistent being. His tall, broad, muscular, active frame was characteristic; and so was his head, with the strange elevation of the eyebrows, which expresses self-will as strongly in some cases as astonishment in others. Those eyebrows mounting up till they comprehend a good portion of the forehead, have been observed in many more paradoxical persons than one. Then there was the retreating but broad forehead, showing the deficiency of reasoning and speculative power, with the preponderance of imagination, and a huge passion for destruction. The massive self-love and self-will carried up his head to something more than a dignified bearing—even to one of arrogance. His vivid and quick eye, and the thoughtful mouth, were fine, and his whole air was that of a man distinguished in his own eyes certainly, but also in those of others. Tradition reports that he was handsome in his youth. In age he was more.

A gallant egotist.

NATURE did not make him a logician, and if we were ever disappointed at not finding him one, the fault was our own. She made him brave though wayward; an egotist in his method, but with the good of mankind for his aim. He was passionate and prejudiced, but usually in some great cause, and on the right side of it. . . . As for the rest, he was of aristocratic birth, fortune, and education, with democracy for his political aim, and poverty and helplessness for his clients.

HARRIET MARTINEAU. *Biographical Sketches.*

THOMAS DE QUINCEY
1785-1859

1785-1859

DE QUINCEY was by nature a solitary, with a strange aptitude for learning. At thirteen, we read, he wrote Greek with ease. His father was a merchant, who died leaving his wife and children a clear income of £1600 a year; but the shy, sensitive boy seemed incapable of pursuing the ordinary roads. He ran away from school: an arrangement was made by his guardian for him to live on an allowance and educate himself until old enough to go to Oxford; but he preferred to hide himself in London, where he lived for a year or so in extreme poverty, as may be read in the "Confessions of an English Opium Eater." When reconciled to his guardians he went to Worcester College, Oxford, in 1803—his choice of that college being due to the fact that a smaller sum of "caution money" was demanded there than at most of the others. In his essay on "Oxford" De Quincey gives an amusing account of his interview with Dr. Cyril Jackson, then Dean of Christ Church, to whom he had first applied for admission. Masson, in his edition of De Quincey, says that he had the reputation, with some of his college, of possessing a rare amount of erudition, and that Dr. Goodenough, who was one of the examiners at his first examination for the B.A. degree in 1808, told one of the Worcester dons that they had sent up the cleverest man he had ever encountered: if his *viva voce* corresponded with his written work he would carry everything before him. But, for some reason or other—probably because he had already fallen under the influence of opium, De Quincey left Oxford before the second part of the examination, and he never took his degree.

At Bath, near which town his mother had settled, he made the acquaintance of Coleridge, and, through him, of Wordsworth and Southey. In 1809 he took up his residence near Grasmere, but wandered back to London in 1820, where he became one of the band who worked for the *London Magazine*. Eight years later he migrated again to Edinburgh, where he contributed to *Blackwood* and *Tait's Magazine*, and there he died in 1859. His articles in *Tait's* on the Lake Poets were

not appreciated by the subjects. There are not so many contemporary references to De Quincey and his work as might be expected. He was never well known to his fellow-workers. Charles Lamb had introduced him to the *London* proprietors, but there are only a few passages mentioning the name in his Letters. "The Opium-Eater crossed us once with a dazzling path, and hath as suddenly left us darkling," he writes on one occasion to Wordsworth. Lamb also wrote a parody of the "Letter to a Young Man whose Education has been Neglected" and submitted it before publication to De Quincey for his approval.

A recluse, at any rate towards the end of his life, De Quincey was yet acknowledged to be the most charming of companions on those rare occasions when he appeared. He was a Man of Letters who was also a gentleman and a master of the art of conversation.

CARLYLE ON DE QUINCEY

"Christopher North" first introduced the Carlyles to De Quincey. *The opium-eater was not an easy man to know—"the time when he was most brilliant," said Wilson's daughter, who knew him well, "was in the early morning."* But Carlyle, on whom Lamb's eccentricities made so unfavourable an impression, proved more lenient to De Quincey's; and Mrs. Carlyle nursed him when he was seriously ill.

Carlyle meets De Quincey after reading his review of "Wilhelm Meister."

ONE showery day I took refuge in his shop (Jemmy Belcher's); picked up a new magazine, found in it a cleverish and completely hostile criticism of my 'Wilhelm Meister,' of my Goethe, and self, etc., read it faithfully to the end, and have never set eye on it since. On stepping out my bad spirits did not feel much elevated by the dose just swallowed, but I thought with myself, 'This man is perhaps right on some points; if so, let him be admonitory!' And he was so (on a Scotticism, or perhaps two); and I did reasonably soon (in not above a couple of hours), dismiss him to the devil, or to Jericho, as an ill-given, unserviceable kind of entity in my course through this world. It was De Quincey. . . . I recollect

too, how in Edinburgh a year or two after, poor De Quincey, whom I wished to know, was reported to tremble at the thought of such a thing; and did fly pale as ashes, poor little soul, the first time we actually met. He was a pretty little creature, full of wire-drawn ingenuities, bankrupt enthusiasms, bankrupt pride, with the finest silver-toned low voice, and most elaborate gently-winding courtesies and ingenuities in conversation. 'What wouldn't one give to have him in a box, and take him out to talk!' That was Her criticism of him, and it was right good. A bright, ready, and melodious talker, but in the end an inconclusive and long-winded. One of the smallest man figures I ever saw; shaped like a pair of tongs, and hardly above five feet in all. When he sate, you would have taken him, by candle-light, for the beautifullest little child; blue-eyed, sparkling face, had there not been a something, too, which said 'Eccovi—this child has been in hell.' After leaving Edinburgh I never saw him, hardly ever heard of him. His fate, owing to opium etc., was hard and sore, poor fine-strung weak creature, launched *so* into the literary career of ambition and mother of dead dogs.

CARLYLE. *Reminiscences.*

A further note. Dated in 1827.

A MOST gentle and sensible face, only that the teeth are destroyed by opium and the little bit of an underlip projects like a shelf. He speaks with a slow, sad, and soft voice in the politest manner I have almost ever witnessed, and with great gracefulness and sense, were it not that he seems decidedly given to prosing.

Quoted by WILSON. *Carlyle to the French Revolution.*

De Quincey Bankrupt.

As for De Quincey, I have not seen him this winter; and no man, except Bailiffs, it appears, has for the last eighteen months: he is said to be in the utmost unaidable embarrassment; bankrupt in purse, and as nearly as possible in mind. I used to like him well, as one of the prettiest Talkers I ever heard; of great, indeed of diseased *acuteness*, not without depth, of a fine sense too, but of no breadth, no justness, weak, diffuse, super-sensitive; on the whole a perverted, ineffectual

man. Some Papers of his on the Roman Cæsars in *Blackwood* are the last I know of him; Teufelsdröckh might well pause in amazement to find Nero and Commodus thus treated as having "something sacred" still,—in virtue of their purple clothes. De Quincey is one of the most irreclaimable Tories now extant; despising Poverty with a complete contempt; and himself, alas, poorer than ever Job was, who at worst never got *gazetted*.

CARLYLE. *Letters to J. S. Mill.*

Carlyle, Southey and De Quincey.

... BY way of coming closer, I asked mildly, with no appearance of special interest, but with more than I really felt, 'Do you know De Quincey?' (the opium-eater, whom I knew to have lived in Cumberland as his neighbour). 'Yes, sir,' said Southey, with extraordinary animosity, 'and if you have opportunity, I'll thank you to tell him he is one of the greatest scoundrels living!' I laughed lightly, said I had myself little acquaintance with the man, and could not wish to recommend myself by that message. Southey's face, as I looked at it, was become of slate colour, the eyes glancing, the attitude rigid, the figure altogether a picture of Rhadamanthine rage,—that is, rage conscious to itself of being just. He doubtless felt I would expect some explanation from him. 'I have told Hartley Coleridge,' said he, 'that he ought to take a strong cudgel, proceed straight to Edinburgh, and give De Quincey, publicly in the streets there, a sound beating—as a calumniator, cowardly spy, traitor, base betrayer of the hospitable social hearth, for one thing.' It appeared De Quincey was then, and for some time past, writing in 'Blackwood's Magazine' something of an autobiographic nature, a series of papers on the 'Lake' period of his life, merely for the sake of the highly needful trifle of money, poor soul, and with no wish to be untrue (I could believe) or hurt anybody, though not without his own bits of splenetic conviction, and to which latter, in regard of Coleridge in particular, he had given more rein than was agreeable to parties concerned. . . .

CARLYLE. *Reminiscences.*

HOOD ON DE QUINCEY

Thomas Hood describes De Quincey, who was one of his contributors when acting as sub-editor of the London Magazine.

ON my other side, when I turn that way, I see a profile, a shadow of which ever confronts me on opening my writing-desk—a sketch taken from memory, the day after seeing the original. In opposition to the “extra man’s size” of Cunningham, the party in question looks almost boyish, partly from being in bulk somewhat beneath Monsieur Quetelet’s “Average Man,” but still more so from a peculiar delicacy of complexion and smallness of features, which look all the smaller from his wearing, in compliment, probably, to the *Sampsons* of Teutonic Literature, his locks unshorn. Nevertheless whoever looks again,

Sees more than marks the crowd of common men.

There is speculation in the eyes, a curl of the lip, and a general character in the outline, that reminds one of some portraits of Voltaire. And a Philosopher he is every inch. He looks, thinks, writes, talks and walks, eats and drinks, and no doubt sleeps philosophically—*i.e.* deliberately. There is nothing abrupt about his motions,—he goes and comes calmly and quietly—like the phantom in Hamlet, he is here—he is there—he is gone! So it is with his discourse. He speaks slowly, clearly, and with very marked emphasis,—the tide of talk flows like Denham’s river, “strong without rage, without overflowing, full.” When it was my frequent and agreeable duty to call on Mr. De Quincey (being an uncommon name to remember, the servant associated it, on the Memoria Technica principle with a sore throat and always pronounced it Quinsky), and I have found him at home, quite at home, in the midst of a German Ocean of *Literature*, in a storm,—flooding all the floor, the table and the chairs,—billows of books tossing, tumbling, surging open,—on such occasions I have willingly listened by the hour whilst the Philosopher, standing, with his eyes fixed on one side of the room, seemed to be less speaking than reading from a “handwriting on the wall.” Now and then he would diverge, for a Scotch mile or two, to the right or left, till I was tempted to inquire with Peregrine in John Bull

(Colman's not Hook's), "Do you never deviate?"—but he always came safely back to the point where he had left, not lost the scent, and thence hunted his topic to the end. But look!—we are in the small hours, and a change comes o'er the spirit of that "old familiar face." A faint hectic tint leaves the cheek, the eyes are a degree dimmer, and each is surrounded by a growing shadow—signs of the waning influence of that Potent Drug whose stupendous Pleasures and enormous Pains have been so eloquently described by the English Opium Eater. Marry, I have one of his Confessions with his own name and mark to it—an apology for a certain stain on his MS., the said stain being a large purplish ring.—"Within that circle none durst drink but he,"—in fact the impression, coloured, of "a tumbler of laudanum negus, warm, without sugar."

THOMAS HOOD. *Literary Reminiscences* (from *Hood's Own*).

SOUTHEY ON DE QUINCEY

Early days. From a letter to Lieut. Southey (his brother). Dated Nov. 12, 1808.

LITTLE Mr. De Quincey is at Grasmere. He was here last week, and is coming again. I wish he was not so little, and I wish he would not leave his great coat always behind upon the road. But he is a very able man, with a head brimful of information.

WARTER. *Letters of Robert Southey.*

JAMES HOGG ON DE QUINCEY

De Quincey might have stood as a model for that absent-minded Man of Letters, so favourite a figure in the fiction of a few generations ago, who was prepared to swoon at the thought of his room being "put straight," and to whom the simplest financial dealings were a sealed book.

THOUGH he had little of the passion for fine books which afflicts some scholars, he was pursued by a Chinese-like reverence for written or printed paper. Newspapers and magazines, which reached him from all parts of the world, he preserved with religious care; even his MSS. which had been printed he preserved; and his habit of making notes on loose slips of paper in the course of his reading, and depositing them among

the papers, rendered these heaps to be valuable in his eyes, though they were so rather as containing thin veins of gold than as being throughout golden. But only he himself could have told what was valuable, as the notes were not seldom wholly unintelligible to any one else; and the laborious process of sorting was often deferred, while he clung to his gatherings almost with childlike pertinacity. Nay, he was wont to drag such heaps from place to place with him, whereby arose some of the oddest accidents perhaps on record.

Tea-chests of papers.

ON one occasion, when he was about to pay a visit to Professor Lushington in Glasgow, he resolved that he would do a great deal of work while enjoying the quiet and comfort of his esteemed friend's home. Accordingly, he had two tea-chests filled with such papers, and these he took with him. On reaching Glasgow, he placed the chests under the care of a porter to convey to his destination; he, apparently, proceeding with the porter to guard them. Having gone so far, the porter found that his load was heavier than he had bargained for; and either he or De Quincey suggested that it would be well to leave the boxes in some place near at hand. A bookseller's shop was espied not far off, and to that the two betook themselves. The bookseller agreed to allow the two chests house-room for a short time, and they were accordingly left with him. But De Quincey had omitted to note the name, the number of the shop, or even the name of the street, and was never able to find the place. On his return to Edinburgh, he mourned over the irreparable loss of his valuable papers; and after a considerable time, when he had quite given them up as lost for ever, I wrote to a friend in Glasgow detailing the circumstances, and asking whether he would take the trouble to send round to the booksellers', inquiring if any such boxes had been left with either of them. To my astonishment, my friend succeeded in ferreting out the precious packages; and De Quincey's look of pleased surprise may be imagined when I directed his attention to them at my office, as I asked, "Do you know these boxes?" . . . I remember another occasion, when I accompanied him to have his daguerreotype taken. The studio of the daguerreotype artist was in Princes Street; and, returning by way of the

High Street, we were overtaken by a severe thunderstorm, which drove us into Paxton's Royal Exchange Hotel for shelter. While there having a basin of soup, the waiter, after closely scrutinising my companion, gently touched him on the arm, and said, "I think, sir, I have a bundle of papers which you left here some time ago." A parcel was accordingly produced, which, sure enough, proved to be papers belonging to De Quincey. It then turned out that my friend had slept at this hotel some twelve months before, and on that occasion had confided these papers to the waiter, asking him to keep them till he called for them.

Financial affairs.

THE underlying sense of his own helplessness in practical matters was sometimes brought out with a peculiar mixture of the pathetic and the humorous. He did not care for receiving large sums of money at once—preferring it in small sums as he required them; and he was positively put about by having anything to do with cheques. On one occasion when I had given him a cheque for some £30, to balance his account to a particular date, he put the cheque into one or other of his pockets and went away. In a short time he returned, in great concern, saying that he must have dropped it, vigorously re-performing the labour of search as he spoke, by turning his pockets inside out. I said to him, "It doesn't matter, I shall at once send over to the bank and stop payment"—on which assurance he looked greatly relieved, and went away. But in a few minutes he returned again to tell me, that, after all, he had found it at the bottom of that spacious side-pocket of his coat already referred to; and he urged me to take back the cheque, and give him a portion of the sum in cash—the remainder to be paid to him as he required it.

— JAMES HOGG. *Reminiscences* (from *De Quincey's Life and Writings*).

B. W. PROCTER ("BARRY CORNWALL") ON DE QUINCEY

"*Barry Cornwall*," it is clear, did not like De Quincey, who was one of his colleagues on the London Magazine. He has two passages dealing with him—one in the "Biographical Notes" and

the other in "Recollections of Men of Letters." The first is taken from a letter to Mr. J. T. Fields, who wrote the papers called "Barry Cornwall and Some of his Friends" in Harper's.

YOUR De Quincey is a man of a good deal of reading, and has thought on divers and sundry matters; but he is evidently so thoroughly well pleased with the Sieur Thomas De Quincey that his self-sufficiency spoils even his best works. Then some of his facts are, I hear, *quasi* facts only, not unfrequently. He has his moments when he sleeps, and becomes oblivious of all but the aforesaid 'Thomas' who pervades both his sleeping and waking visions. I, like all authors, am glad to have a little praise now and then (it is my hydromel), but it must be dispensed by others. I do not think it decent to manufacture the sweet liquor myself.

B. W. PROCTER. *Autobiographical Fragments and Biographical Notes.*

I REFRAIN from expatiating on Mr. Thomas De Quincey. I did not like him, and I do not admire those essays of his with which I am best acquainted. He dined once at Taylor and Hessey's monthly festivity, and I saw him once or twice elsewhere. His paper entitled "Confessions of an Opium Eater" is undoubtedly powerful writing; but his "Reminiscences" and "Biographical Essays" stand in a different predicament. These are in my opinion often poor and without merit. I do not know any instance in the writings of an author of note comprehending so much pedantry, pretension and impertinence. They are all divergence. Even in the splenetic parts he cannot adhere to his subject; but must recede to some opinion of his own which has no connection with the matter on hand, or he refers to some classical or German author for the sake of exhibiting his learning, or general knowledge. His style therefore becomes wearisome, inconsequent, and parenthetical to an offensive degree. . . .

De Quincey and Hazlitt.

. . . MR. DE QUINCEY and Hazlitt thought poorly of each other. Hazlitt pronounced verbally that the other could be good only "whilst the opium was trickling from his mouth," but he never

published anything derogatory to the other's genius. De Quincey, on the other hand, seems to have forced opportunities for sneering at Hazlitt. For my own part, I think that the opinions of both were wrong; Hazlitt in part, De Quincey altogether. It is not worth while entering into this quarrel; but I observe that Mr. De Quincey denounces as defects in Hazlitt those qualities which he himself did not possess. If Hazlitt's sentences are occasionally too epigrammatic, his style had the great merit of directness and solidity. He never seems to have spun out his sentences from love of prolixity, nor to have foisted in his "little learning" upon all occasions, to fatigue and perplex his readers. Mr. De Quincey was certainly an able man; and he was, I believe, liked and admired by those to whom he uncovered his more amiable qualities. But this exposition did not take place in London, where his attractions were not manifested. We had but a partial view of him.

B. W. PROCTER. *Recollections of Men of Letters.*

HARRIET MARTINEAU ON DE QUINCEY

LET this strange commentator of individual character meet with more mercy and a wiser interpretation than he was himself capable of. He was not made like other men; and he did not live, think, or feel like them. A singular organisation was singularly and fatally deranged in its action before it could show its best quality. Marvellous analytical faculty he had; but it all oozed out in barren words. Charming eloquence he had; but it degenerated into egotistical garrulity, rendered tempting by the gilding of his genius. It is questionable whether, if he had never touched opium or wine, his real achievements would have been substantial—for he had no conception of a veritable standpoint of philosophical investigation; but the actual effect of his intemperance was to aggravate to excess his introspective tendencies, and to remove him incessantly further from the needful discipline of true science. His conditions of mind and body were abnormal, and his study of the one thing he knew anything about—the human mind—was radically imperfect. His powers, noble and charming as they might have been, were at once wasted and weakened through their own partial excess. His moral nature relaxed and sank, as must always be the case

where sensibility is stimulated and action paralysed; and the man of genius who, forty years before, administered a moral warning to all England, and commanded the sympathy and admiration of a nation, has lived on, to achieve nothing but the delivery of some confidences of questionable value and beauty, and to command from us nothing more than a compassionate sorrow that an intellect so subtle and an eloquence so charming in its pathos, its humour, its insight, and its music, should have left the world in no way the better for such gifts—unless by the warning afforded in “Confessions” first, and then by example, against the curse which neutralized their influence and corrupted its source.

HARRIET MARTINEAU. *Biographical Sketches.*

JAMES PAYN ON DE QUINCEY

De Quincey at Lasswade.

... CONSIDERABLE alarm agitated my youthful heart as I drew near the house: I felt like Burns on the occasion when he was first about ‘to dinner wi’ a Lord;’ it was a great honour, but something rather to be talked about afterwards than to be enjoyed in itself. There were passages in De Quincey’s writings which showed that the English opium-eater was not always in a dreamy state, but could be severe and satirical. My apprehensions, however, proved to be utterly groundless, for a more gracious and genial personage I never met. Picture to yourself a very diminutive man, carelessly—very carelessly—dressed; a face lined, careworn, and so expressionless that it reminded one of ‘that chill changeless brow, where cold Obstruction’s apathy appals the gazing mourner’s heart’—a face like death in life. The instant he began to speak, however, it lit up as though by electric light; this came from his marvellous eyes, brighter and more intelligent (though by fits) than I have ever seen in any other mortal. They seemed to me to glow with eloquence.

Why De Quincey never travelled by coach.

... THE association of commonplace people and their pointless observations were in fact intolerable to him. They did not bore him in the ordinary sense, but seemed, as it were, to outrage

his mind. To me, to whom the study of human nature in any form had become even then attractive, this was unintelligible, and I suppose I showed it in my face, for he proceeded to explain matters. 'Some years ago,' he said, 'I was standing on the pier at Tarbet, on Loch Lomond, waiting for the steamer. A stout old lady joined me; I felt that she would presently address me; and she did. Pointing to the smoke of the steamer which was making itself seen above the next headland, "There she comes," she said. "La, sir! if you and I had seen that fifty years ago, how wonderful we should have thought it!" Now the same sort of thing,' added my host with a shiver, 'might happen to me any day, and that is why I always avoid a public conveyance.'

JAMES PAYN. *Some Literary Recollections.*

WILLIAM BLAKE

1757-1827

WILLIAM BLAKE

1757-1827

BLAKE's first volume of poetry was published in 1783, at the instance of the Rev. Henry Mathew and of Flaxman, the sculptor. These "Poetical Sketches," we are told in the beginning of the book "were the production of untutored youth, commenced in his twelfth, and occasionally resumed by the author till his twentieth year." This is to say that the earliest must have been written in the lifetime of Gray and Goldsmith. James Macpherson had published the collected edition of "The Works of Ossian" in 1765, and the same year had seen the "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry" rescued by Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore, from the hands of a housemaid who was about to light the fire with some old manuscript. Blake, by the way, was a firm believer in the antiquity of the Ossianic songs.

In 1771, at the age of fourteen, Blake had been apprenticed to a well-known engraver of that time, James Basire, who lived at 31 Great Queen Street, and in his shop it is recorded that Blake once saw Goldsmith. In Mr. Arthur Symons's book we are told that he was apprenticed to Basire rather than to the more famous Ryland, engraver to the king, because on being taken to Ryland's studio he said: 'I do not like the man's face: it looks as if he will live to be hanged.' Twelve years later Ryland actually was executed for forgery. Fifty guineas was the fee paid for Blake's apprenticeship, and he remained with Basire seven years, proceeding, in 1778, to the school of the Royal Academy, where he appears to have finished his education as a painter. In 1782 he married Catherine Boucher, daughter of a market-gardener at Battersea, and for the rest of his life the two continued to live together, generally in extreme poverty.

In 1787 the "Songs of Innocence" came out. In this book Blake was his own printer and publisher, engraving upon copper plates, by a secret process of his own, both the text and illustrations, or rather decorative designs, of the poems, and afterwards colouring the pages by hand. Between that date and

1794, when the companion volume, "Songs of Experience," was published, came a series of "works of prophecy" as he called them. It is on these "Prophetic Books"—"The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," "The Gates of Paradise," and others—that the charge of insanity against Blake was chiefly based.

At the beginning of the new century Blake left London and took a cottage at Felpham, near Bognor, at the instigation of William Hayley, author of "The Triumphs of Temper," which reached a twelfth edition twenty years after publication. Hayley had been a friend of Cowper, and wished to write his life: Blake, he thought, might help him in the task. It must be admitted that Hayley was one of the very few literary men of the age who displayed any desire to cultivate Blake's acquaintance, and thus far he is entitled to some consideration. He was not, perhaps, quite so fatuous a personage as we have been taught to imagine. His great poem, intended to induce "young and fair readers to cultivate the gentle qualities of the heart and maintain a constant flow of good humour," is said to have effected a reformation in the character of more than one impulsive damsel; and the man himself, strange to say, was no puny dreamer, but a powerful, hard-riding country squire. At first all was well. Felpham was a Paradise, and "Mr. Hayley acts like a prince;" but as time went on the two began to grate upon each other's nerves. Blake wrote at last:

Thy friendship oft has made my heart to ache:
Do be my enemy—for friendship's sake!

—one of several epigrams by which he sought to relieve his feelings. And when, after three years, he returned to London, it is probable that his gratitude to his patron had sunk to a low ebb. Still, he had enjoyed a three years' rest, and he admitted in one of his letters that the sequestration in the country had enabled him to recollect all "his scattered thoughts on art, and to resume his primitive and original ways of execution" in painting and engraving.

William Blake remains an isolated figure in the history of English art and letters. He died at the age of seventy, three years after Byron, hardly known as an artist and even less known as a poet. His orbit crossed those of Lamb, Coleridge, Wordsworth: for a moment or two he seems to have kindled

a spark of curiosity or even enthusiasm, and then to have dropped out of their minds for ever. He died in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and did not rise again, or hardly, till the twentieth.

LAMB ON BLAKE

Lamb explains that Blake is a Real Man.

BLAKE is a real name, I assure you, and a most extraordinary man, if he be still living. He is the Robert Blake, whose wild designs accompany a splendid folio edition of the "Night Thoughts," which you may have seen, in one of which he pictures the parting of soul and body by a solid mass of human form floating off, God knows how, from a lumpish mass (fac Simile to itself) left behind on the dying bed. He paints in water colours marvellous strange pictures, visions of his brain, which he asserts that he has seen. They have great merit. He has *seen* the old Welsh bards on Snowdon—he has seen the Beauifullest, the strongest, and the Ugliest Man, left alone from the Massacre of the Britons by the Romans, and has painted them from memory (I have seen his paintings), and asserts them to be as good as the figures of Raphael and Angelo, but not better, as they had precisely the same retrovisions and prophetic visions with himself.¹ The painters in oil (which he will have it that neither of them practised) he affirms to have been the ruin of art, and affirms that all the while he was engaged in his Water paintings, Titian was disturbing him, Titian the Ill Genius of Oil Painting. His Pictures—one in particular, the Canterbury Pilgrims (far above Stothard's)—have great merit, but hard, dry, yet with grace. He has written a Catalogue of them with a most spirited criticism on Chaucer, but mystical and full of Vision. His poems have been sold hitherto only in Manuscript. I never read them; but a friend at my desire procured the "Sweep Song." There is one to a tiger, which I have heard recited, beginning:

"Tiger, Tiger, burning bright,
Thro' the deserts of the night,"

which is glorious, but alas! I have not the book; for the man is flown, whither I know not—to Hades or a Mad House.

¹ "themself" in original.

But I must look on him as one of the most extraordinary persons of the age.

CHARLES LAMB. *Letters.*

It is curious to note that even Lamb did not get Blake's name correctly. It was, of course, William. With regard to the statement about his poems being only sold in manuscript, the writer probably meant that the "Songs of Innocence" were not printed in the ordinary way, but etched in writing hand on the plates that contained the illustrations.

The letter was in answer to one from Bernard Barton, who had come across Blake's verses "The Chimney-Sweeper" in a volume edited by James Montgomery, called "The Chimney-Sweeper's Friend, and Climbing-Boy's Album." See note to Ainger's edition of Lamb's Letters. Vol. II, p. 105.

H. CRABB ROBINSON ON BLAKE

In Crabb Robinson's "Diary, etc.," are to be found several references to Blake, whom he was anxious apparently to introduce to other literary gentlemen of his acquaintance. Perhaps he hoped, in time, to convert the poet-painter into a normal Man of Letters. The first entry is dated July 24, 1811.

LATE at C. Lamb's. Found a large party there. Southey had been with Blake, and admired both his designs and his poetic talents. At the same time he held him to be a decided madman. Blake, he said, spoke of his visions with the diffidence which is usual with such people, and did not seem to expect that he should be believed. He showed Southey a perfectly mad poem, called "Jerusalem." Oxford Street is in Jerusalem.

The next reference of importance is in a letter to Miss Wordsworth, written in February, 1826.

I HAVE above mentioned Blake. I forget whether I have referred before to this very interesting man, with whom I am now become acquainted. Were the "Memorials" at my hand, I should quote a fine passage in the Sonnet on the Cologne Cathedral as applicable to the contemplation of this singular being. I gave your brother some poems in MS. by him, and they interested him, as well they might; for there is an affinity

between them, as there is between the regulated imagination of a wise poet, and the incoherent outpourings of a dreamer. Blake is an engraver by trade, a painter and a poet also, whose works have been subject of derision to men in general; but he has a few admirers, and some of eminence have eulogized his designs. He has lived in obscurity and poverty, to which the constant hallucinations in which he lives have doomed him. . . . He is not so much a disciple of Jacob Boehme and Swedenborg as a fellow-visionary. He lives as they did, in a world of his own, enjoying constant intercourse with the world of spirits. He receives visits from Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Voltaire, etc., and has given me repeatedly their very words in their conversations. . . . There is something so delightful about the man, though in great poverty, he is so perfect a gentleman, with such genuine dignity and independence—scorning presents, and of such native delicacy in words . . . that I have not scrupled promising to bring him and Mr. Wordsworth together.

Diary, etc., of H. Crabb Robinson.

Hazlitt on Blake's poems, from the same source (1827).

MANY of his designs were unconscious imitations. He illustrated Blair's "Grave," the "Book of Job," and four books of Young's "Night Thoughts." The last I once showed to William Hazlitt. In the designs he saw no merit; but when I read him some of Blake's poems he was much struck, and expressed himself with his usual strength and singularity. "They are beautiful," he said, "and only too deep for the vulgar. As to God, a worm is as worthy as any other object, all alike being to him indifferent, so to Blake the chimney-sweeper, etc. He is ruined by vain struggles to get rid of what presses on the brain; he attempts impossibilities."

Finally, in 1838, he reports the opinions of Landor and—Tom Moore.

A GREAT deal of rattling on the part of Landor. He maintained Blake to be the greatest of poets. . . . Tom Moore had never heard of Blake, at least not of his poems. Even he acknowledged the beauty of such as were quoted.

Diary, etc., of H. Crabb Robinson.

In 1809 Blake held an exhibition, at the house of James Blake, of sixteen pictures, the first nine of which were described as "Frescoes" or "experiment pictures" and the remaining seven as drawings—i.e. water-colour. The Catalogue (included in the entrance fee) was entitled "A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures, Poetical and Historical Inventions, painted by William Blake, in Water-Colours, being the ancient Method of Fresco Painting Restored; and Drawings, for Public Inspection, and for Sale by Private Contract." Crabb Robinson writes of it—

THIS catalogue I possess, and it is a very curious exposure of the artist's mind. I wished to send it to Germany and to give a copy to Lamb and others, so I took four, and giving 10s., bargained that I should be at liberty to go again. 'Free! as long as you live,' said the brother, astonished at such a liberality, which he had never experienced before, nor I dare say did afterwards. Lamb was delighted with the catalogue, especially with the description of a painting afterwards engraved . . . declared that Blake's description was the finest criticism he had ever read of Chaucer's poem.

CRABB ROBINSON. *Diary, etc.* (from Arthur Symons's *William Blake*).

The Catalogue, says Mr. Symons, is badly printed on poor paper in the form of a small octavo book of 66 pages. "It is full of fierce, exuberant wisdom, which plunges from time to time into a bright, demonstrative folly; it is a confession, a criticism, and a kind of gospel of sanctity and honesty and imagination in art. The whole thing is a thinking aloud. One hears an impetuous voice as if saying: 'I have been scorned long enough by these fellows, who owe to me all that they possess; it shall be so no longer.' As he thinks, his pen follows; he argues with foes actually visible to him; never does he realise the indifferent public that may glance at what he has written, and how best to interest or convince it if it does. He throws down a challenge and awaits an answer." And the answer came from the only newspaper that noticed the exhibition—the Examiner. The following selected quotations are taken again from the work of Arthur Symons.

BUT when the ebullitions of a distempered brain are mistaken for the sallies of genius by those whose works have exhibited

the soundest thinking in art, the malady has indeed reached a pernicious height, and it becomes a duty to try and arrest its progress. Such is the case with the productions and admirers of William Blake, an unfortunate lunatic, whose personal inoffensiveness secures him from confinement, and, consequently, of whom no public notice would have been taken, if he was not forced on the notice and animadversion of *The Examiner*, in having been held up to public admiration by many esteemed amateurs and professors as a genius in some respect original and legitimate. The praises which these gentlemen bestowed last year on this unfortunate man's illustrations to Blair's *Grave* have, in feeding his vanity, stimulated him to publish his madness more largely, and thus again exposed him, if not to the derision, at least to the pity of the public. . . . Thus encouraged, the poor man fancies himself a great master, and has painted a few wretched pictures, some of which are unintelligible allegory, others an attempt at sober character by caricature representation, and the whole "blotted and blurred," and very badly drawn. These he calls an *Exhibition*, of which he has published a *Catalogue*, or rather a farrago of nonsense, unintelligibleness, and egregious vanity, the wild effusions of a distempered brain. . . .

The Examiner, Sept. 17, 1809.

Crabb Robinson describes Blake's ménage.

HE dwells in Fountain Court in the Strand. I found him in a small room, which seems to be both a working-room and a bedroom. Nothing could exceed the squalid air both of the apartment and his dress, but in spite of dirt—I might say filth—an air of natural gentility is diffused over him. And his wife, notwithstanding the same offensive character of her dress and appearance, has a good expression of countenance, so that I shall have a pleasure in calling on and conversing with these worthy people. . . .

At a dinner in his company—with Linnell the painter and others.

I WAS aware of his idiosyncrasies and therefore to a great degree prepared for the sort of conversation which took place at and after dinner, an altogether unmethedical rhapsody of art,

poetry, and religion—he saying the most strange things in the most unemphatic manner, speaking of his *Visions* as any man would of the most ordinary occurrence. He was then 68 years of age. He had a broad, pale face, a large full eye with a benignant expression—at the same time a look of languor, except when excited, and then he had an air of inspiration. But not such as without a previous acquaintance with him, or attending to *what* he said, would suggest the notion that he was insane. There was nothing *wild* about his look, and though very ready to be drawn out to the assertion of his favourite ideas, yet with no warmth as if he wanted to make proselytes. . . .

CRABB ROBINSON. *Diary, etc.*

COLERIDGE ON BLAKE

A letter to C. A. Tulk, dated 1818. A copy of "Songs of Innocence" had apparently been sent by Tulk to Coleridge for his inspection and criticism.

I RETURN you Blake's poesies, metrical and graphic, with thanks. . . . I begin with my dyspathies that I may forget them, and have uninterrupted space for loves and sympathies. Title-page and the following emblem contain all the faults of the drawings with as few beauties as could be in the compositions of a man who was capable of such faults and such beauties. The faulty despotism in symbols amounting in the title-page to the *μισητὸν*, and occasionally, irregular unmodified lines of the inanimate, sometimes as¹ the effect of rigidity and sometimes of exossation like a wet tendon. So likewise the ambiguity of the drapery. Is it a garment or the body incised and scored out? The lumpness (the effect of vinegar on an egg) in the upper one of the two prostrate figures in the title-page, and the straight line down the waistcoat of pinky goldbeaters' skin in the next drawing, with the I-don't-know-whatness of the countenance, as if the mouth had been formed by the habit of placing the tongue not contemptuously, but stupidly, between the lower gums and the lower jaw—these are the only *repulsive* faults I have noticed. The figure, however, of the second leaf, abstracted from the *expression* of the countenance given it by something about the mouth, and the inter-

¹ Thus in text. Presumably should be "has."

space from the lower lip to the chin, is such as only a master learned in his art could produce.

Coleridge then proceeds to deal with the poems, grading them by different signs. Those that gave him pleasure "in the highest degree" were, first and foremost "The little black Boy," "The Divine Image," and "Night": after these he rated "Holy Thursday," "Infant Joy," and "The School Boy." About "The Little Vagabond" he confesses himself perplexed, writing at length (not too intelligibly) as follows:

THOUGH I cannot approve altogether of this last poem, and have been inclined to think that the error which is most likely to beset the scholars of Emanuel Swedenborg is that of utterly demerging the tremendous incompatibilities with an evil will that arise out of the essential Holiness of the abysmal A-seity in the love of the Eternal Person, and thus giving temptation to weak minds to sink this love itself into *Good Nature*, yet still I disapprove the mood of mind in this wild poem so much less than I do the servile blind-worm, wrap-rascal scurf-coat of *fear* of the *modern* Saint (whose whole being is a lie, to themselves as well as to their brethren), that I should laugh with good conscience in watching a Saint of the new stamp, one of the first stars of our eleemosynary advertisements, groaning in wind-pipe! and with the whites of his eyes up-raised at the *audacity* of this poem! . . .

S. T. COLERIDGE. *Letters.*

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

1792-1822

P E R C Y B Y S S H E S H E L L E Y

1792-1822

SHELLEY, of good family and heir to a baronetcy, went to Eton at the age of 12, and thus early displayed his own opinions on the subjects of Liberty and Independence, resisting the system of fagging and being generally known as "Mad Shelley" or as "The Atheist." From Eton he went up to University College, Oxford, in 1810, and was expelled, after less than a year's residence, for refusing to disavow the authorship of a pamphlet entitled "The Necessity of Atheism," which he had drawn up with his friend, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, afterwards the writer of his "Life."

The story of Shelley's two matrimonial adventures is well known. Harriet Westbrook, daughter of a retired hotel-keeper, was also a schoolfellow of his four sisters: he attempted to convert her to his own views—he was always an ardent proselytizer—and she fell in love with him. They eloped, and were married in Edinburgh, though permanent marriage was against all Shelley's principles. This was in 1811: in the spring of 1814 Shelley first saw Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin as a grown-up girl of seventeen, promptly fell in love with her, and carried her off to Switzerland, although he had only just gone through a form of remarriage with Harriet in London. The Godwins, though they had themselves maintained opinions regarding marriage not unlike Shelley's own, were very angry.

On his grandfather's death an arrangement was made with Sir Timothy Shelley by which, on surrendering certain future rights as to entailed property, he was allowed a regular income of £1000 a year, out of which he assigned two hundred to Harriet, who had recently given birth to a son. Both Shelley himself and Mary were apparently on good terms with the discarded wife, who had been invited—a curious proposal—to come and live with them. For a time the pair settled at Bishopsgate, near Windsor Forest, where he became friends with T. L. Peacock, author of "Nightmare Abbey" and "Crotchet Castle"; but in 1816 they left for Switzerland together with

Claire Clairmont, and were joined there by Byron. On their return to England the following year occurred the suicide of Harriet, who drowned herself in the Serpentine.

Mr. Westbrook brought a Chancery suit (heard before Lord Chancellor Eldon) for the custody of the two children, on the ground that Shelley had deserted his wife and intended to bring the children up in his own anti-social opinions. The poet had to pay £120 a year for their maintenance. In 1818 he and his family, again accompanied by Miss Clairmont, went to Italy, where the remainder of his life was passed. On the 8th of July, 1822, occurred the storm in which he and Williams were drowned while sailing in a small schooner which they had recently acquired. Their bodies were found washed ashore, by Trelawny, and burned near Via Reggio. Shelley's ashes were afterwards buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome.

Leigh Hunt was one of the few men who maintained Shelley's reputation as a poet, in his own time. At the time of his death, scarcely fifty people read his poetry, and even fewer understood it. About 1829, it is recorded, seven years after his death, the Union Society of Cambridge sent a deputation to the Oxford Union, with the object of maintaining Shelley's superiority as a poet over Byron. The motion was put forward, it is interesting to note, by Sir Francis Doyle, of Christ Church, and opposed by Mr. Manning, and on a division Byron was declared the greater poet by a majority of fifty-seven. Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton, and A. H. Hallam were among the young Cantabs in the minority.

To Italy Shelley's poetry owes much. In the note on the "Prometheus Unbound" Mrs. Shelley wrote: "The charm of the Roman climate helped to clothe his thoughts in greater beauty than they had ever worn before. And, as he wandered among the ruins made one with Nature in their decay, or gazed on the Praxitelean shapes that throng the Vatican, the Capitol, and the palaces of Rome, his soul imbibed forms of loveliness which became a portion of itself." Shelley himself wrote of the "Prometheus" that "the blue sky of Rome and the effect of the vigorous awakening of spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama."

Shelley at school (Sion House) ætat. 10.

SHELLEY was at this time tall for his age, slightly and delicately built, and rather narrow chested, with a complexion fair and ruddy, a face rather long than oval. His features, not regularly handsome, were set off by a profusion of silky brown hair, that curled naturally. The expression of countenance was one of exceeding sweetness and innocence. His blue eyes were very large and prominent, considered by phrenologists to indicate a great aptitude for verbal memory. They were at times, when he was abstracted, as he often was in contemplation, dull, and, as it were, insensible to external objects; at others they flashed with the fire of intelligence. His voice was soft and low, but broken in its tones,—when anything much interested him, harsh and immodulated; and this peculiarity he never lost.

In later life.

HIS features were small—the upper part of his face not strictly regular—the eyes unusually prominent, too much so for beauty. His mouth was moulded after the finest modelling of Greek art, and wore an habitual expression of benevolence, and when he smiled, his smile irradiated his whole countenance. His hands were thin, and expressed feeling to the fingers' ends, being such as Vandyke would have loved to paint; his hair profuse, silken, and naturally curling, was at a very early period interspersed with grey. His frame was but a tenement for spirit, and in every gesture and lineament showed that he was a portion of that intellectual beauty, which he endeavoured to deify. He did not look so tall as he was, being nearly five feet eleven, for his shoulders were a little bent by study and ill-health, owing to his being near-sighted, and leaning over his books; and which increased the narrowness of his chest.

MEDWIN. *Life of Shelley.*

BYRON ON SHELLEY

Letter to Shelley dated Ravenna, April 26, 1821. Keats had died on February 23.

I AM very sorry to hear what you say of Keats—is it *actually* true? I did not think criticism had been so killing. Though I differ from you essentially in your estimate of his performances,

I so much abhor all unnecessary pain, that I would rather he had been seated on the highest peak of Parnassus than have perished in such a manner. Poor fellow! though with such inordinate self-love he would probably have not been very happy. I read the review of 'Endymion' in the Quarterly. It was severe,—but surely not so severe as many reviews in that and other journals upon others.

You know my opinion of *that second-hand* school of poetry. You also know my high opinion of your own poetry,—because it is of *no* school. I read 'Cenci'—but, besides that I think the *subject* essentially *un-dramatic*, I am not an admirer of our old dramatists *as models*. I deny that the English have hitherto had a drama at all. Your 'Cenci,' however, was a work of power, and poetry. As to my drama, pray revenge yourself upon it, by being as free as I have been with yours.

I have not yet got your 'Prometheus,' which I long to see. I have heard nothing of mine, and do not know that it is yet published. I have published a pamphlet on the Pope controversy, which you will not like. Had I known that Keats was dead—or that he was alive and so sensitive—I should have omitted some remarks upon his poetry, to which I was provoked by his *attack* upon *Pope*; and my disapprobation of *his own* style of writing.

In a letter to Moore, Byron gives his opinion of Shelley as a man. As to poor Shelley, who is another bugbear to you and the world, he is, to my knowledge, the *least* selfish and the mildest of men—a man who has made more sacrifices of his fortune and feelings for others than any I ever heard of. With his speculative opinions I have nothing in common, nor desire to have.

And, in another to Murray.

you are all mistaken about Shelley. You do not know how mild, how tolerant, how good he was in society; and as perfect a gentleman as ever crossed a drawing-room, when he liked, and where he liked.

BYRON. *Letters.*

LAMB ON SHELLEY

From a letter to Bernard Barton, dated Oct. 9, 1822. Charles Lamb compares Shelley's voice with Southey's.

SHELLEY I saw once. His voice was the most obnoxious squeak I ever was tormented with, ten thousand times worse than the Laureate's, whose voice is the worst part about him, except his Laureateship. Lord Byron opens upon him on Monday in a parody (I suppose) of the *Vision of Judgment*, in which latter the Poet I think did not show his. To award his Heaven and his Hell in the presumptuous manner he has done, was a piece of immodesty as bad as Shelleyism.

From another letter to the same, date August, 1824.

I CAN no more understand Shelley than you can. His poetry is "thin sown with profit or delight." Yet I must point to your notice a sonnet conceived and expressed with a witty delicacy. It is that addressed to one who hated him, but who could not persuade him to hate *him* again. His coyness to the other's passion—(for hate demands a return as much as love, and starves without it)—is most arch and pleasant. Pray, like it very much. For his theories and nostrums, they are oracular enough; but I either comprehend 'em not, or there is "miching malice" and mischief in 'em, but, for the most part, ringing with their own emptiness. Hazlitt said well of 'em—"Many are the wiser and better for reading Shakespeare, but nobody was ever wiser or better for reading Shelley."

CHARLES LAMB. *Letters.*

CARLYLE ON SHELLEY

Carlyle and Southey talk about Shelley.

SOUTHEY and I got speaking about Shelley (whom perhaps I remembered to have lived in the Lake-country for some time, and had started on Shelley as a practicable topic). Southey did not rise into admiration of Shelley either for talent or conduct; spoke of him and his life, without bitterness, but with contemptuous sorrow, and evident aversion mingled with his pity. To me also poor Shelley always was, and is, a kind of ghastly object, colourless, pallid, without health or warmth or vigour;

the sound of him shrieky, frosty, as if a ghost were trying to 'sing to us;' the temperament of him spasmodic, hysterical, instead of strong or robust; with fine affections and aspirations, gone all such a road:—a man infinitely too weak for that solitary scaling of the Alps which he undertook in spite of all the world. At some point of the dialogue I said to Southey, 'A haggard existence that of his.' I remember Southey's pause, and the tone and air with which he answered, 'It is a haggard existence.'

CARLYLE. *Reminiscences.*

The one word "ineffectual" probably sums up sufficiently the reason of Carlyle's lack of interest in writers like Keats, Shelley and Charles Lamb. It recurs in almost all the judgments he delivered on them.

THE Letters themselves are very innocent and clear; and deserve printing,¹ with such a name attached to them; but it is not they that I care for on the present occasion. In fact, I am not sure but you would excommunicate me,—at least lay me under the "lesser sentence," for a time,—if I told you all I thought of Shelley! Poor soul, he has always seemed to me an extremely weak creature, and lamentable much more than admirable. Weak in genius, weak in character (for these two always go together); a poor, thin, spasmodic, hectic, shrill and pallid being;—one of those unfortunates, of whom I often speak, to whom "the talent of silence," first of all, has been denied. The speech of such has never been good for much. Poor Shelley, there is something void, and Hades-like in the whole inner world of him; his universe is all vacant azure, hung with a few frosty mournful if beautiful stars; the very voice of him (his style, &c.), shrill, shrieky, to my ear has too much of the ghost! . . .

CARLYLE. *Letters to Robert Browning.*

WORDSWORTH ON SHELLEY

Trelawny (not perhaps the best of witnesses) reports a few obiter dicta of Wordsworth—met at Lausanne—on Shelley.

¹ Browning's publisher, Moxon, had prevailed upon him to write an Introduction to twenty-five letters, believed to be by Shelley, but afterwards discovered to be forgeries. This little book had been sent by Browning to Carlyle.

... my friend Roberts told me the strangers were the poet Wordsworth, his wife and sister. . . . Now that I knew that I was talking to one of the veterans of the gentle craft, as there was no time to waste in idle ceremony, I asked him abruptly what he thought of Shelley as a poet.

"Nothing," he replied as abruptly.

Seeing my surprise, he added, "A poet who has not produced a good poem before he is twenty-five we may conclude cannot and never will do so."

"The 'Cenci'!" I said eagerly.

"Won't do," he replied, shaking his head, as he got into the carriage.

TRELAWNY. *Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author.*

Other opinions of Wordsworth.

SHELLEY is one of the best *artists* of us all: I mean in workmanship of style.

He told me (J. J. Tayler, B.A.) he thought the greatest of modern geniuses, had he given his powers a proper direction, and one decidedly superior to Byron, was Shelley, a young man, author of 'Queen Mab,' who died lately at Rome (!)

WORDSWORTH. *Prose Works* (Grosart).

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK ON SHELLEY

The author of "Headlong Hall" and other novels, and of "Rhododaphne," a poem that excited the admiration of Edgar Allan Poe, was appointed Shelley's executor conjointly with Lord Byron. The following sketch of Shelley's personal appearance is taken partly from the "Life" by Thomas Jefferson Hogg, quoted by Peacock in his paper called "Memoirs of Percy Bysshe Shelley."

MR. HOGG says:—His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall, but he stooped so much that he seemed of a low stature. His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day; but they were tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt, and sometimes violent, occasionally even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate and almost feminine, of the purest

white and red; yet he was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun. . . . His features, his whole face, and particularly his head, were in fact unusually small; yet the last *appeared* of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy . . . he often rubbed it up fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. . . . His features were not symmetrical (the mouth perhaps excepted); yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual. . . . I admired the enthusiasm of my new acquaintance, his ardour in the cause of science, and his thirst for knowledge. But there was one physical blemish that threatened to neutralize all his excellence.

This blemish (Peacock continues) was his voice.

THERE is a good deal in these volumes about Shelley's discordant voice. This defect he certainly had; but it was chiefly observable when he spoke under excitement. Then his voice was not only dissonant, like a jarring string, but he spoke in sharp fourths, the most unpleasing sequence of sound that can fall on the human ear; but it was scarcely so when he spoke calmly, and not at all so when he read; on the contrary, he seemed then to have his voice under perfect command: it was good both in tune and in tone; it was low and soft, but clear, distinct, and expressive. I have heard him read almost all Shakspeare's tragedies, and some of his most poetical comedies, and it was a pleasure to hear him read them.

T. L. PEACOCK. *Memoirs of Percy Bysshe Shelley.*

THE QUARTERLY REVIEW, APRIL, 1819, ON SHELLEY

Shelley's Doctrines.

That "transcendental epic", *The Revolt of Islam*, succeeded *Alastor* in 1817. It was at first named *Laon and Cythna*, or the Revolution of the Golden City, and is reviewed in the Quarterly under both titles. In the earlier version the lovers of the story were brother and sister—an arrangement which the publishers, very wisely, considered unlikely to suit the public taste. At the end of the

review there are a few words about Rosalind and Helen, published in the following year.

LAON AND CYTHNA is the same poem with the Revolt of Islam—under the first name it exhibited some features which made 'the experiment on the temper of the public mind,' as the author calls it, somewhat too bold and hazardous. This knight-errant in the cause of 'a liberal and comprehensive morality' has already sustained some 'perilous handling' in his encounters with Prejudice and Error, and acquired in consequence of it a small portion of *the better part of valour*. Accordingly Laon and Cythna withdrew from circulation; and happy had it been for Mr. Shelley if he had been contented with his failure, and closed his experiments. But with minds of a certain class, notoriety, infamy, any thing is better than obscurity; baffled at a thousand attempts after fame, they will still make one more at whatever risk,—and they end commonly like an awkward chemist who perseveres in tampering with his ingredients, till, in an unlucky moment, they take fire, and he is blown up by the explosion.

Laon and Cythna has accordingly re-appeared with a new name, and a few slight alterations. If we could trace in these any signs of an altered spirit, we should have hailed with the sincerest pleasure the return of one whom nature intended for better things, to the ranks of virtue and religion. But Mr. Shelley is no penitent; he has reproduced the same poison, a little, and but a little, more cautiously disguised, and as it is thus intended only to do the more mischief at less personal risk to the author, our duty requires us to use his own evidence against himself, to interpret him where he is obscure now, by himself where he was plain before, and to exhibit the 'fearful consequences' to which he would bring us, as he drew them in the boldness of his first conception.

Before, however, we do this, we will discharge our duty to Mr. Shelley as poetical critics—in a case like the present, indeed, where the freight is so pernicious, it is but a secondary duty to consider the 'build' of the vessel which bears it; but it is a duty too particularly our own to be wholly neglected. Though we should be sorry to see the Revolt of Islam in our readers' hands, we are bound to say that it is not without beautiful passages, that the language is in general free from errors

of taste, and the versification smooth and harmonious. In these respects it resembles the latter productions of Mr. Southey, though the tone is less subdued, and the copy altogether more luxuriant and ornate than the original. Mr. Shelley indeed is an unsparing imitator; and he draws largely on the rich stores of another mountain poet, to whose religious mind it must be matter, we think, of perpetual sorrow to see the philosophy which comes pure and holy from his pen, degraded and perverted, as it continually is, by this miserable crew of atheists or pantheists, who have just sense enough to abuse its terms, but neither heart nor principle to comprehend its import, or follow its application.

“Rosalind and Helen.”

WE had closed our remarks on *Laon and Cythna*, when ‘*Rosalind and Helen*’ was put into our hands: after having devoted so much more space to the former than its own importance merited, a single sentence will suffice for the latter. Though not without some marks of the same ability, which is occasionally manifested in Mr. Shelley’s earlier production, the present poem is very inferior to it in positive merit, and far more abundant in faults: it is less interesting, less vigorous and chaste in language, less harmonious in versification, and less pure in thought; more rambling and diffuse, more palpably and consciously sophistical, more offensive and vulgar, more unintelligible. So it ever is and must be in the downward course of infidelity and immorality;—we can no more blot out the noblest objects of contemplation, and the most heart-stirring sources of gratitude from the creation without injury to our intellectual and moral nature, than we can refuse to walk by the light of the sun without impairing our ocular vision. Scarcely any man ever set himself in array against the cause of social order and religion, but from a proud and rebel mind, or a corrupt and undisciplined heart: where these are, true knowledge cannot grow. In the enthusiasm of youth, indeed, a man like Mr. Shelley may cheat himself with the imagined loftiness and independence of his theory, and it is easy to invent a thousand sophisms, to reconcile his conscience to the impurity of his practice; but this lasts only long enough to lead him on beyond the power of return; he ceases to be the dupe, but with

desperate malignity he becomes the deceiver of others. Like the Egyptian of old, the wheels of his chariot are broken, the path of 'mighty waters' closes in upon him behind, and a still deepening ocean is before him:—for a short time, are seen his impotent struggles against a resistless power, his blasphemous execrations are heard, his despair but poorly assumes the tone of triumph and defiance, and he calls ineffectually on others to follow him to the same ruin—finally, he sinks 'like lead' to the bottom, and is forgotten. So it is now in part, so shortly will it be entirely with Mr. Shelley:—if we might withdraw the veil of private life, and tell what we *now* know about him, it would be indeed a disgusting picture that we should exhibit, but it would be an unanswerable comment on our text; it is not easy for those who *read only*, to conceive how much low pride, how much cold selfishness, how much unmanly cruelty are consistent with the laws of this 'universal' and 'lawless love.' But we must only use our knowledge to check the groundless hopes which we were once prone to entertain of him.

Quarterly Review, April, 1819.

WILLIAMS¹ ON SHELLEY

From a letter—Williams to Trelawny.

SHELLEY is certainly a man of most astonishing genius, in appearance extraordinarily young, of manners mild and amiable, but withal full of life and fun. His wonderful command of language, and the ease with which he speaks on what are generally considered abstruse subjects, are striking; in short, his ordinary conversation is akin to poetry, for he sees things in the most singular and pleasing lights; if he wrote as he talked, he would be popular enough. Lord Byron and others think him by far the most imaginative poet of the day. The style of his lordship's letters to him is quite that of a pupil, such as asking his opinion, and demanding his advice on certain points, &c. I must tell you, that the idea of the tragedy of "Manfred," and many of the philosophical, or rather metaphysical, notions interwoven in the composition of the fourth Canto of "Childe Harold," are of his suggestion; but this, of course, is between ourselves.

TRELAWNY. *Records of Shelley, Byron, etc.*

¹ Lieutenant Edward Elliker Williams (1793–1822), friend of Byron and Shelley, with whom he perished.

KEATS ON SHELLEY

To Shelley on "Endymion" and "The Cenci."

HAMPSTEAD, August, 1820.

I AM glad you take any pleasure in my poor poem, which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care as much as I have done about reputation. I received a copy of the *Cenci*, as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of—the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits now-a-days is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon; he must have "self-concentration"—selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the writer of *Endymion*, whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards? I am picked up and sorted to a pip. My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk.

Letters of John Keats.

HAZLITT ON SHELLEY

The Character of Shelley.

THE author of *Prometheus Unbound* has a fire in his eye, a fever in his blood, a maggot in his brain, a hectic flutter in his speech, which mark out the philosophic fanatic. He is sanguine-complexioned and shrill-voiced. As is often observable in the case of religious enthusiasts, there is a slenderness of constitutional stamina, which renders the flesh no match for the spirit. His bending, flexible form appears to take no strong hold of things, does not grapple with the world about him, but slides from it like a river—

And in its liquid texture mortal wound
Receives no more than can the fluid air.

The shock of accident, the weight of authority make no impression on his opinions, which retire like a feather, or rise

from the encounter unhurt through their own buoyancy. He is clogged by no dull system of realities, no earth-bound feelings, no rooted prejudices, by nothing that belongs to the mighty trunk and hard husk of nature and habit, but is drawn up by irresistible levity to the regions of mere speculation and fancy, to the sphere of air and fire, where his delighted spirit floats in 'seas of pearl and clouds of amber.' There is no *caput mortuum* of worn-out, threadbare experience to serve as ballast to his mind; it is all volatile intellectual salt of tartar, that refuses to combine its evanescent, inflammable essence with anything solid or anything lasting. Bubbles are to him the only realities:—touch them, and they vanish. Curiosity is the only proper category of his mind, and though a man in knowledge, he is a child in feeling. Hence he puts everything into a metaphysical crucible to judge of it himself and exhibit it to others as a subject of interesting experiment, without first making it over to the ordeal of his common sense or trying it on his heart. This faculty of speculating at random on all questions may in its overgrown and uninformed state do much mischief without intending it, like an overgrown child with the power of a man. Mr. Shelley has been accused of vanity—I think he is chargeable with extreme levity; but this levity is so great that I do not believe he is sensible of its consequences. He strives to overturn all established creeds and systems; but this is in him an effect of constitution. He runs before the most extravagant opinions; but this is because he is held back by none of the merely mechanical checks of sympathy and habit. He tampers with all sorts of obnoxious subjects; but it is less because he is gratified with the rankness of the taint than captivated with the intellectual phosphoric light they emit. It would seem that he wished not so much to convince or inform as to shock the public by the tenor of his productions; but I suspect he is more intent upon startling himself with his electrical experiments in morals and philosophy; and though they may scorch other people, they are to him harmless amusements, the coruscations of an Aurora Borealis, that 'play round the head, but do not reach the heart.' Still, I could wish that he would put a stop to the incessant, alarming whirl of his voltaic battery.

HAZLITT. *On Paradox and Commonplace.*

COWDEN CLARKE ON SHELLEY

SHELLEY'S figure was a little above the middle height, slender, and of delicate construction, which appeared the rather from a lounging or waving manner in his gait, as though his frame was compounded barely of muscle and tendon; and that the power of walking was an achievement with him and not a natural habit. Yet I should suppose that he was not a valitudinarian, although that has been said of him on account of his spare and vegetable diet: for I have the remembrance of his scampering and bounding over the gorse-bushes on Hampstead Heath late one night,—now close upon us, and now shouting from the height like a wild school-boy. He was both an active and an enduring walker—feats which do not accompany an ailing and feeble constitution. His face was round, flat, pale, with small features; mouth beautifully shaped; hair bright brown and wavy; and such a pair of eyes as are rarely in the human or any other head,—intensely blue, with a gentle and lambent expression, yet wonderfully alert and engrossing; nothing appeared to escape his knowledge.

COWDEN CLARKE. *Recollections of Writers.*

LEIGH HUNT ON SHELLEY

Leigh Hunt first met Shelley in the early days of the Examiner before its indictment on account of the Regent. The young reformer "was then a youth, not come to his full growth; very gentlemanly, earnestly gazing at every object that interested him, and quoting the Greek dramatists." When Hunt was sent to prison Shelley had corresponded with him; and the two saw a good deal of each other when Hunt went to Italy at his invitation and that of Lord Byron.

SHELLEY, when he died, was in his thirtieth year. His figure was tall and slight, and his constitution consumptive. He was subject to violent spasmodic pains, which would sometimes force him to lie on the ground till they were over; but he had always a kind word to give to those about him, when his pangs allowed him to speak. In this organization, as well as in some other respects, he resembled the German poet, Schiller. Though

well-turned, his shoulders were bent a little, owing to premature thought and trouble. The same causes had touched his hair with gray; and though his habits of temperance and exercise gave him a remarkable degree of strength, it is not supposed that he could have lived many years. . . . Like the Stagyrite's, his voice was high and weak. His eyes were large and animated, with a dash of wildness in them; his face small, but well shaped, particularly the mouth and chin, the turn of which was very sensitive and graceful. His complexion was naturally fair and delicate, with a colour in the cheeks. He had brown hair, which, though tinged with gray, surmounted his face well, being in considerable quantity, and tending to a curl. His side-face, upon the whole, was deficient in strength, and his features would not have told well in a bust; but when fronting and looking at you attentively his aspect had a certain seraphical character that would have suited a portrait of John the Baptist, or the angel whom Milton describes as holding a reed "tipt with fire."

LEIGH HUNT. *Autobiography*.

Shelley's poetry.

MR. SHELLEY'S poetry is invested with a dazzling and subtle radiance, which blinds the common observer with light. Piercing beyond this, we discover that the characteristics of his poetical writings are an exceeding sympathy with the whole universe, material and intellectual; an ardent desire to benefit his species; an impatience of the tyrannies and superstitions that hold them bound; and a regret that the power of one loving and enthusiastic individual is not proportioned to his will, nor his good reception with the world at all proportioned to his love. His poetry is either made up of all these feelings united, or is an attempt to escape from their pressure into the widest fields of imagination. I say an attempt,—because, as we have seen, escape he does not; and it is curious to observe how he goes pouring forth his baffled affections upon every object he can think of, bringing out its beauties and pretensions by the light of a radiant fancy, and resolved to do the whole detail of the universe a sort of poetical justice, in default of being able to make his fellow-creatures attend to justice political. From

this arises the fault of his poetry, which is a want of massiveness,—of a proper distribution of light and shade. The whole is too full of glittering points; of images touched and illustrated alike, and brought out into the same prominence. He ransacks every thing like a bee, grappling with it in the same spirit of penetration and enjoyment, till you lose sight of the field he entered upon, in following him into his subtle recesses. He is also too fond, in his larger works, of repeating the same images drawn from the material universe and the sea. When he is obliged to give up these peculiarities, and to identify his feelings and experience with those of other people, as in his dramatic poems, the fault no longer exists. His object remains; —that of increasing the wisdom and happiness of mankind; but he has laid aside his wings, and added to the weight and purpose of his body: the spiritual part of him is invested with ordinary flesh and blood. In truth, for ordinary or immediate purposes, a great deal of Mr. Shelley's poetry ought to have been written in prose. It consists of philosophical speculations, which required an introduction to the understandings of the community, and not merely, as he thought, a recommendation to their good will. The less philosophic he becomes, reverting to his own social feelings, as in some of the pathetic complaints before us; or appealing to the common ones of mankind upon matters immediately agitating them, as in the "Ode to Naples;" or giving himself fairly up to the sports of fancy, as in the "Witch of Atlas," or "The Translations from Goethe and Homer;" the more he delights and takes with him, those who did not know whether to argue, or to feel, in some of his larger works. The common reader is baffled with the perplexing mixture of passion and calmness; of the severest reasoning, and the wildest fiction; of the most startling appearances of dissent, and the most conventional calls upon sympathy. But in all his writing there is a wonderful sustained sensibility, and a language lofty and fit for it. He has the art of using the stateliest words and the most learned idioms without incurring the charge of pedantry; so that passages of more splendid and sonorous writing are not to be selected from any writer, since the time of Milton: and yet when he descends from his ideal worlds, and comes home to us in our humbler bowers, and our yearnings after love and affection, he attunes the most natural

feelings to a style so proportionate, and withal to a modulation so truly musical, that there is nothing to surpass it in the lyrics of Beaumont and Fletcher.

LEIGH HUNT. *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries.*

DE QUINCEY ON SHELLEY

WHEN one thinks of the early misery which he suffered, and of the insolent infidelity which, being yet so young, he wooed with a lover's passion, then the darkness of midnight begins to form a deep impenetrable background, upon which the phantasmagoria of all that is to come may arrange itself in troubled phosphoric streams and sweeping processions of woe. Yet again, when one recurs to his gracious nature, his fearlessness, his truth, his purity from all fleshliness of appetite, his freedom from vanity, his diffusive love and tenderness,— suddenly out of the darkness reveals itself a morning of May, forests and thickets of rose advance to the foreground, and from the midst of them looks out 'the eternal child,' cleansed from his sorrow, radiant with joy, having power given him to forget the misery which he suffered, power given him to forget the misery which he caused, and leaning with his heart upon that dove-like faith against which his erring intellect had rebelled.

DE QUINCEY. *Essay on Shelley.*

JAMES HENRY LEIGH HUNT

1784-1859



John leigh Hunt.

AUTHOR OF "BYRON & HIS CONTEMPORARIES."

J A M E S H E N R Y L E I G H H U N T

1784-1859

LEIGH HUNT was more remarkable as the figure-head of a literary movement than as poet or essayist himself. He had his virtues (even Thomas Carlyle admitted them) but he was never exactly a dignified literary figure; and to modern eyes he retains something of that not altogether charming casualness about his obligations that characterised the Harold Skimpole of "Bleak House." Yet he endured two years' imprisonment (not, perhaps, too rigorous, by his own account) for an article in his paper, the *Examiner*, which was held to be a libel on the Prince Regent.¹ This was in December, 1812, when he was twenty-eight years old: when he was released, two years later, his martyrdom had assisted, no doubt, to gather round him a considerable literary following among the younger writers of the day. Byron and Moore had visited him in prison, but they were not to become members of the literary *coterie* which he founded. Lamb, like himself, a schoolboy at Christ's Hospital (Hunt persisted in calling it Christ-Hospital, after the old form, but we need not follow him here), Hazlitt, and Haydon the painter were his first recruits: then came Charles Cowden Clarke, who drew John Keats into the circle; and later, as friends of Keats, Joseph Severn and J. H. Reynolds. Shelley

¹ The actual words of the libel may be worth quoting: they ran as follows: What person, unacquainted with the true state of the case, would imagine, in reading these astounding eulogies, that this 'Glory of the people' was the subject of millions of shrugs and reproaches!—that this 'Protector of the arts' had named a wretched foreigner his historical painter, in disparagement or in ignorance of the merits of his own countrymen!—that this 'Maecenas of the age' patronised not a single deserving writer!—that this 'Breather of eloquence' could not say a few decent extempore words, if we are to judge, at least, from what he said to his regiment on its embarkation for Portugal!—that this 'Conqueror of hearts' was the disappointer of hopes!—that this 'Exciter of desire' (bravo! Messieurs of the *Post!*)—this 'Adonis in loveliness' was a corpulent man of fifty! in short, this *delightful, blissful, wise, pleasurable, honourable, virtuous, true, and immortal* prince, was a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demureps, a man who has just closed half a century without one single claim on the gratitude of his country, or the respect of posterity!

and Hunt had met before the two years' imprisonment: now it was through Hunt that Shelley first met Keats. For some time, before leaving for Italy, Keats stayed in Hunt's house at Hampstead, but it seems that their relations became rather strained later, Keats apparently thinking that his connection with Hunt had not tended to improve his poetry or his footing with the reviewers.

Shelley went to Italy in 1818, and from there wrote to suggest that Hunt should come and join himself and Byron in the establishment of a new magazine called the *Liberal*. The expedition was made, but from the start it was unfortunate, the journey out (as may be seen by the account in Hunt's "Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries") lasting almost eight months. Then came Shelley's tragic death, and the inevitable quarrel between Hunt and Byron. Hunt's justification of his own position, in the book mentioned above, which he published on his return to England, was generally considered in bad taste and added little at the time to his reputation or resources. During the time that he lived in Cheyne Row, next door to Carlyle, Hunt's fortunes were perhaps at their lowest; but after 1844, when he came into an annuity from Mrs. Shelley and a Civil List pension of £200, procured for him by the then Lord John Russell, his position was considerably improved. But he was never seen to advantage in the management of a household.

Leigh Hunt was a Man of Letters who was at his best in airy comment and light journalistic banter. He had no great creative power, but a very considerable judgment of what was good and lasting in the works of others. Curiously enough, his excellent taste failed him when he might have turned it to account in the revision of his own work. He was an easy essayist, but the vein of flippant familiarity in his writing offended the Northern reviewers. Yet his friends, and he had many, loved him.

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE ON HUNT

The following is from No. I of the essays in Blackwood "On the Cockney School of Poetry." The quarrel which the writer had with Leigh Hunt seems to have been based on the fact that he had not

enjoyed a liberal education, that his taste was deplorable and his pretensions extravagant, and, in fine, that he was no gentleman. He could not, apparently, write so much as a dedication, without "betraying the Shibboleth of low birth and low habits." And the poem, "Rimini," which formed the chief subject of this attack, is represented as a glorification of incest. "His poetry is that of a man who has kept company with kept-mistresses . . . With him indecency is a disease, and he speaks unclean things from perfect inanition. . . . For him there is no charm in simple seduction; and he gloats over it only when accompanied with adultery and incest." But his chief crime, if we examine closely, seems to have been that he dared to address Byron in terms of familiarity. In those days a Lord was indeed a Lord—and even the fiercest critics were expected to salute his rank before offering any remarks on the quality of his verse.

How such a profligate creature as Mr. Hunt can pretend to be an admirer of Mr. Wordsworth, is to us a thing altogether inexplicable. One great charm of Wordsworth's noble compositions consists in the dignified purity of thought, and the patriarchal simplicity of feeling, with which they are throughout penetrated and imbued. We can conceive a vicious man admiring with distant awe the spectacle of virtue and purity; but if he does so sincerely, he must also do so with the profoundest feeling of the error of his own ways, and the resolution to amend them. His admiration must be humble and silent, not pert and loquacious. Mr. Hunt praises the purity of Wordsworth as if he himself were pure, his dignity as if he also were dignified. . . .

The Founder of the Cockney School would fain claim poetical kindred with Lord Byron and Thomas Moore. Such a connexion would be as unsuitable for them as for William Wordsworth. The days of Mr. Moore's follies are long since over; and, as he is a thorough gentleman, he must necessarily entertain the greatest contempt for such an under-bred person as Mr. Leigh Hunt. But Lord Byron! How must the haughty spirit of Lara and Harold contemn the subaltern sneaking of our modern tuft-hunter. The insult which he offered to Lord Byron in the dedication of *Rimini*,—in which he, a paltry cockney newspaper scribbler, had the assurance to address one of the most nobly-born of English Patricians, and one of

the first geniuses whom the world ever produced, as "My dear Byron," although it may have been forgotten and despised by the illustrious person whom it most nearly concerned,—excited a feeling of utter loathing and disgust in the public mind, which will always be remembered whenever the name of Leigh Hunt is mentioned.

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Oct., 1817.

The following rather violent specimen of invective is taken from Article No. III on the Cockney School of Poetry—the opening paragraph.

OUR hatred and contempt of Leigh Hunt as a writer, is not so much owing to his shameless irreverence to his aged and afflicted king—to his profligate attacks on the character of the king's sons—to his low-born insolence to that aristocracy with whom he would in vain claim the alliance of one illustrious friendship—to his paid panderisms to the vilest passions of that mob of which he is himself a firebrand—to the leprous crust of self-conceit with which his whole moral being is indurated—to that loathsome vulgarity which constantly clings round him like a vermined garment from St. Giles'—to that irritable temper which keeps the unhappy man, in spite even of his vanity, in a perpetual fret with himself and all the world beside, and that shows itself equally in his deadly enmities and capricious friendships,—our hatred and contempt of Leigh Hunt, we say, is not so much owing to these and other causes, as to the odious and unnatural harlotry of his polluted muse. We were the first to brand with a burning iron the false face of this kept-mistress of a demoralising incendiary. We tore off her gaudy veil and transparent drapery, and exhibited the painted cheeks and writhing limbs of the prostitute. . . .

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, July, 1818.

In reference to the Blackwood criticisms of Hunt, Mr. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe¹ (who had also been ridiculed in Blackwood's) wrote to Constable:

I THINK somebody, to mortify Lockhart in the tenderest point, should attack the criticism on Hunt *quoad* its own vulgarity,

¹ Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, 1781–1851, antiquary, artist and friend of Scott.

and the motto might be, 'Set a thief,' etc., for you will observe that the thing is written with an affectation of vast refinement. Now, in this tirade he talks of 'a man of fashion,' and 'people labouring to be genteel;' but in the London circle a man would be cut dead who used either of these phrases. The word 'genteel,' even *valets-de-chambre* sicken at. Again, he talks of 'My Lord Holland!' No man of the world puts the *my* to a lordship now-a-days; moreover, his respect for lords is most vulgarly wonderful! I wish some witty wag would do this; it would have a very fine effect.

Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondents.

POE ON HUNT

On "The Indicator and the Companion," by Leigh Hunt.

THIS volume contains some two or three papers which are worth preserving—which have in them the elements of life—and which will leave a definite and perhaps a permanent impression upon every one who reads them. In general, however, it is made up of that species of easy writing which is not the easiest reading. We find here too much slipshodiness, both in thought and manner, and too little of determined purpose. The tone is not that of a bold genius uttering vigorous things carelessly and inconsiderately, with contempt or neglect of method or completeness, but rather that of a naturally immethodical and inaccurate intellect, making a certain air of ruggedness and *insouciance* the means of exalting the commonplace into the semblance of originality and strength. Hunt has written many agreeable papers, but no great ones. His points will bear no steady examination. The view at first taken of him by the public is far nearer the truth perhaps than that which seems to have been latterly adopted. His "Feast of the Poets" is possibly his best composition. As a rambling essayist, he has too little of the raw material. As a critic, he is merely saucy, or lackadaisical, or falsely enthusiastic, or, at best, pointedly conceited. His judgment is not worth a rush—witness his absurd eulogies on Coleridge's "Pains of Sleep," quoted in the volume before us. In his remarks upon Con. De Basso's "Ode to a Dead Body," he has said critically some of the very best things it ever occurred to him to say; but if there be

need to shew the pure imbecility and irrelevancy of the paper *as a criticism*, let it only be contrasted with what a truly critical spirit would write. The highest literary quality of Hunt is a secondary or tertiary grade of Fancy. His loftiest literary attainment is to *entertain*. This is precisely the word which suits his case. As for excitement we must not look for it in him. And, unhappily, his books are not of such character that they may be taken up with pleasure (as may the "Spectator,") by a mind exhausted through excitement. In this condition we require *repouse*—which is the antipodes of the style of Hunt. And since, for the *ennuyé*, he has insufficient stimulus, it is clear that, as an author, he is fit for very little, if really for anything at all.

EDGAR ALLAN POE. *Marginalia.*

CARLYLE ON HUNT

Thomas Carlyle, who could find little to say in favour of most of his contemporaries, and nothing at all for a poet like Keats, had almost always a kind word for Leigh Hunt. In spite of his careless and Bohemian temperament Hunt had been friendly and useful as a neighbour when the Carlyles first settled down in Cheyne Row.

... you will find Hunt a most kindly, lively, clear-hearted creature, greatly to be sympathised with, to be honoured in many things and loved; with whom you will find no difficulty to get on the right footing, and act as the case will direct. Hunt is a special kind of man; a representative of London Art, and what it can do and bring forth at this epoch; what was too contemptuously called the "Cockney School," for it is a sort of half-way house to something better; and will one day be worth noting in British Literary History.

... Hunt is a most *harmless* man. I call him one of the ancient Mendicant Minstrels, strangely washed ashore into a century he should not have belonged to. For the rest, unless you feel *called*, it is not worth while to go: he has nothing to teach you, nothing to show you—except himself, should you think that worthy.

CARLYLE. *Letters to J. S. Mill.*

There came a time, however, when Carlyle was delivering his second course of lectures and had become something of a notability. The delivering of lectures was not an enjoyable matter to Carlyle, and his nerves were perhaps at their worst during these periods. "The conditions of the thing! Ah, the conditions! It is like a man singing through a fleece of wool." So he wrote in his journal, adding that he had sent off to his mother a newspaper—presumably Hunt's *Examiner*—with a report.

HUNT's criticism no longer friendly; not so in spirit, though still in letter; a shade of spleen in it; very natural, flattering even. He finds me grown to be a something now. His whole way of life is at death-variance with mine. In the *Examiner* he expresses himself afflicted with my eulogy of *thrift*, and two days ago he had *multa gemens* to borrow two sovereigns of me. It is an unreasonable existence *ganz und gar*. Happily I have next to nothing to do with Hunt, with him or with his. *Felix sit!*

FROUDE. *Carlyle's Life in London.*

HAZLITT ON HUNT

Hazlitt Compares Lamb with Leigh Hunt.

LAMB does not live where he did. By shifting his abode, his notions seem less fixed. He does not wear his old snuff-coloured coat and breeches. It looks like an alteration in his style. An author and a wit should have a separate costume, a particular cloth; he should present something positive and singular to the mind, like Mr. Douce of the Museum. Our faith in the religion of letters will not bear to be taken to pieces, and put together again by caprice or accident. Leigh Hunt goes there sometimes. He has a fine vinous spirit about him, and tropical blood in his veins; but he is better at his own table. He has a great flow of pleasantries and delightful animal spirits; but his hits do not tell like Lamb's; you cannot repeat them the next day. He requires not only to be appreciated, but to have a select circle of admirers and devotees, to feel himself quite at home. He sits at the head of a party with great gaiety and grace; has an elegant manner and turn of features; is never at a loss—*aliquando sufflaminandus erat*—has continual sportive sallies of wit or fancy; tells a story capitally; mimics an actor

or an acquaintance to admiration; laughs with great glee and good-humour at his own or other people's jokes; understands the point of an equivoque or an observation immediately; has a taste and knowledge of books, of music, of medals; manages an argument adroitly; is genteel and gallant, and has a set of by-phrases and quaint allusions always at hand to produce a laugh;—if he has a fault, it is that he does not listen as well as he speaks, is impatient of interruption, and is fond of being looked up to, without considering by whom. I believe, however, he has pretty well seen the folly of this. Neither is his ready display of personal accomplishment and variety of resources an advantage to his writings. They sometimes present a desultory and slipshod appearance, owing to this very circumstance. The same things that tell, perhaps, best to a private circle round the fireside are not always intelligible to the public, nor does he take pains to make them so. He is too confident and sure of his audience. That which may be entertaining enough with the assistance of a certain liveliness of manner may read very flat on paper, because it is abstracted from all the circumstances that had set it off to advantage. A writer should recollect that he has only to trust to the immediate impression of words, like a musician who sings without the accompaniment of an instrument. There is nothing to help out, or slubber over, the defects of the voice in the one case nor of the style in the other. The reader may, if he pleases, get a very good idea of Leigh Hunt's conversation from a very agreeable paper he has lately published, called the *Indicator*, than which nothing can be more happily conceived or executed.

On the style of Leigh Hunt.

to my taste, the author of "Rimini" and Editor of the *Examiner* is among the best and least corrupted of our poetical prose-writers. In his light but well-supported columns we find the raciness, the sharpness, and sparkling effect of poetry, with little that is extravagant or far-fetched, and no turgidity or pompous pretension. Perhaps there is too much the appearance of relaxation and trifling (as if he had escaped the shackles of rhyme), a caprice, a levity, and a disposition to innovate in words and ideas. Still, the genuine master-spirit of the prose-writer is there; the tone of lively, sensible conversation; and

this may in part arise from the author's being himself an animated talker. Mr. Hunt wants something of the heat and earnestness of the political partisan; but his familiar and miscellaneous papers have all the ease, grace and point of the best style of Essay-writing. Many of his effusions in the *Indicator* show that if he had devoted himself exclusively to that mode of writing, he inherits more of the spirit of Steele than any man since his time.

HAZLITT. *The Plain Speaker.*

B. W. PROCTER ("BARRY CORNWALL") ON HUNT

Leigh Hunt at home.

HUNT was a little above the middle size, thin and lithe. His countenance was very genial and pleasant. His hair was black; his eyes were very dark, but he was short-sighted, and therefore perhaps it was that they had nothing of that fierce glance which black eyes so frequently possess. His mouth was expressive, but protruding; as is sometimes seen in half-caste Americans. It was shortly after my first visit that I first met Charles Lamb, Hazlitt, Peacock, Walter Coulson, and others at supper there. Hunt never gave dinners, but his suppers of cold meat and salad were cheerful and pleasant; sometimes the cheerfulness (after a "wassail bowl") soared into noisy merriment. I remember one Christmas or New Year's evening, when we sat there till two or three o'clock in the morning, and when the jokes and stories and imitations so overcame me that I was nearly falling off my chair with laughter. . . .

Money Matters.

LEIGH HUNT was always in trouble about money; but he was seldom sad, and never sour. The prospect of poverty did not make much impression on him who never possessed wealth. Otherwise he would probably have pursued some regular laborious employment. He deceived himself when he said that he could not understand accounts. He had a good logical head and great quickness, but he liked the tasks to which he devoted his life. He liked to display his worship for Spenser, to criticise poetry, and to write of May-day and of rural pleasures. I believe that he seldom if ever undertook a task to which he was

originally disinclined. There is no doubt that some of his voluntaries became wearisome before completion, but the work was always commenced because it was attractive to him.

... He was essentially a gentleman in conduct, in demeanour, in manner, in his consideration for others—indeed, in all things that constitute the material of a gentleman. He was very good tempered; thoroughly easy tempered. He saw hosts of writers, of less ability than himself, outstripping him on the road to future success, yet I never heard from him a word that could be construed into jealousy or envy; not even a murmur. . . .

A generous critic.

LEIGH HUNT possessed a great fund of positive active kindness. He bestowed praise on the great and on the small with a liberal hand. He placed on record his liking for writers, who differed so materially from himself in merit, that the promulgation of this was likely to suggest a doubt as to the validity of his own pretensions. To persons whose ability was not yet admitted, or who had encountered enmity in letters, he was always generous, never taking the mean or ill-natured view, where the brighter might be adopted. Although he was a careful and just critic (never praising or blaming a book without reading it throughout), he always looked on the tender part of man's nature and on the pleasanter side of things.

He had no vanity, in the usually accepted meaning of the word. I mean, that he had not that exclusive vanity which rejects almost all things beyond self. He gave as well as received; no one more willingly. He accepted praise less as a mark of respect from others, than as a delight of which all are entitled to partake, such as spring weather, the scent of flowers, or the flavour of wine. It is difficult to explain this; it was like an absorbing property in the surface of the skin. Its possessor enjoys pleasure almost involuntarily, whilst another of colder or harder temperament is insensible to it. He had good, but not violent impulses. He was soon swayed, less by his convictions than by his affections. His mind had not much of the debating element in it. His smiles and tears were easy.

... His comparative estimates of authors were perhaps

sometimes at fault. . . . I suspect that his reading was not very extensive, and that he therefore made up his mind upon too confined a view. He became a critic and a pronouncer of his own opinions too early.

B. W. PROCTER. *Recollections of Men of Letters.*

SOUTHEY ON HUNT

This severely moral letter from Southey is a reply to an appeal on behalf of Leigh Hunt, who at this time was attempting to keep the Tatler going with only doubtful success. Addressed to Edward Moxon,¹ dated Dec. 10, 1831.

MY DEAR SIR,

Mr. Forster has sent me the circular address concerning Mr. Leigh Hunt. As your name is affixed to it, I reply rather to you than to him; not in any disrespect to that gentleman, but because I can explain myself with more satisfaction to you than to a stranger. They who are acquainted with me know that I am neither resentful nor intolerant. I bear no ill will towards Mr. Leigh Hunt. I think highly of his powers—none of his friends more highly—and I am sorry for his distressed circumstances; but this address dwells upon his labours as a public writer, his suffering in consequence, his disposition to discover all that is good and hopeful, and his habit of inculcating it. To a paper which advances any claims for Mr. Leigh Hunt upon these grounds, I cannot let my name appear. If it be desirable that the peace and order of society should be maintained; if Christian morals are the best security for both, and if Christianity be (as I know it to be) the only sure foundation for individual happiness, and for the general weal, then assuredly during those twenty years of his public life, for which he is commended in this circular, Mr. Leigh Hunt has not been meritoriously employed, for he has been actively labouring to subvert them all. It would not be difficult for his friends to

¹ Edward Moxon the publisher began with Longmans in 1821, and afterwards set up in business for himself with the support of Samuel Rogers in 1830. Moxon published Lamb, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Disraeli, Landor (who was characteristically "thorny"), and the first complete edition of Shelley's works, for which he was prosecuted. He died in 1858, and the business continued for twenty years after.

draw up an address, in which, without compromising any of his opinions, or touching upon them (whatever they may now be), the appeal might be made solely upon the score of his literary merits, placing him thus, as it were, within the sacred territory which ought always to be considered and respected as neutral ground. They who admire him upon all accounts would not be the less willing to subscribe if this prudential course were followed; and it would enable others to do so who, while they admire his genius, and regard his errors with as much compassion as his misfortunes, must, for their own sakes, refuse to sanction any approval, expressed or implied, of what they believe to have been erroneous and mischievous. I shall be glad if this advice be taken, given as it is in goodwill. I wish Mr. Leigh Hunt all the good that he desires for himself, and, it may be feared, much more; for I wish him not only health, prosperity, and deliverance from all temporal cares, but also that God's mercy, acting upon his better mind, may prepare it for that divine philosophy without which no one, however prosperous, can be happy, and with which no one, however afflicted, can be without consolation and hope. Believe me, my dear sir,

Yours very truly,

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

WARTER. *Letters of Robert Southey.*

COWDEN CLARKE ON LEIGH HUNT

Leigh Hunt as a Talker.

LEIGH HUNT's conversation was simply perfection. If he were in argument—however warm it might be—he would wait fairly and patiently to hear "the other side." Unlike most eager conversers, he never interrupted. Even to the youngest among his colloquists he always gave full attention, and listened with an air of genuine respect to whatever they might have to adduce in support of their view of a question. He was peculiarly encouraging to young aspirants, whether fledgling authors or callow casuists; and treated them with nothing of condescension, or affable accommodation of his intellect to theirs, or amiable tolerance for their comparative incapacity, but, as it were, placed them at once on a handsome footing of

equality and complete level with himself. When, as was frequently the case, he found himself left master of the field of talk by his delighted hearers, only too glad to have him recount in his own felicitous way one of his "good stories," or utter some of his "good things," he would go on in a strain of sparkle, brilliancy, and freshness like a sun-lit stream in a spring meadow. Melodious in tone, alluring in accent, eloquent in choice of words, Leigh Hunt's talk was as delicious to listen to as rarest music. . . . He used more effusion of utterance, more mutation of voice, and more energy of gesture, than is common to most Englishmen when under the excitement of recounting a comic story; and this produced corresponding excitement in his hearers, so that the "success" of his good stories was unfailing, and the laughter that followed him throughout was worked to a climax at the close.

COWDEN CLARKE. *Recollections of Writers.*

HARRIET MARTINEAU ON HUNT

A vignette of Leigh Hunt.

LEIGH HUNT was there, with his cheery face, bright, acute, and full of sensibility; and his thick grizzled hair combed down smooth, and his homely figure;—black handkerchief, grey stockings and stout shoes, while he was full of gratitude to ladies who dress in winter in velvet, and in rich colours; and to old dames in the streets or the country who still wear scarlet cloaks. His conversation was lively, rapid, highly illustrative, and perfectly natural.

HARRIET MARTINEAU. *Autobiography.*

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD ON HUNT

. . . I DO wish you had seen Mr. J——. By the way, I picked up a great many stories from him. He lives at Marlow, and is exceedingly intimate with Peacock and Shelley, and acquainted with all the new school. He says the system of plunder exercised upon poor Mr. Shelley exceeds all belief. Leigh Hunt went to Marlow once for money, and finding Mr. S. without any family, took off a load of the good man's furniture—chairs and tables and bedsteads! Is it not incredible?

M. R. MITFORD. *Letters and Life.*

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM¹ ON HUNT*Leigh Hunt at Sixty.*

AT Leigh Hunt's. He looks wonderfully different in the street from in the house. There, a spare old man in a frock-coat and black stock, with weak eyes and rather careworn look; here, a *young* man (though of sixty), with luxuriant if gray locks, open shirt collar and flowing dressing-gown, bright face, and the easiest way of talking in the world. He is fond of droll paradox, full of delicate appreciation, gay, gentle, good-humoured, with a natural gift, well cultivated, of finding out the 'soul of goodness in things evil.'

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM. *A Diary.*

¹ William Allingham, 1824-1899, is remembered by a few poems and as the friend of Rossetti, who addressed some of his best and most characteristic letters to him.

JOHN KEATS

1795-1821

JOHN KEATS

1795-1821

UNTIL the appearance of Lord Houghton's "Life of Keats" in 1848, it was an article of faith among lovers of poetry that John Keats had been "fouly done to death" by the article in the *Quarterly Review* that follows, which appeared in No. XXXVII, dated April, 1818, but not published until September, immediately after the issue of *Blackwood's* from which I have quoted later. It is not surprising that a young and sensitive poet, in weak health, should have been seriously upset by two such violent attacks, delivered in quick succession; but there seems to be no doubt that Keats possessed a greater reserve of manly endurance, and also perhaps a greater confidence in his own powers, than his literary contemporaries realised.

Byron and Shelley, between them, were chiefly responsible for the growth of the tradition. The former wrote heartlessly:

Who killed John Keats?
"I," said the Quarterly,
So savage and Tartarly;
"Twas one of my feats."

Who shot the arrow?
"The poet-priest Milman
(So ready to kill man)
Or Southey, or Barrow."

It was the hand of John Wilson Croker,¹ as a matter of fact, that sped the shaft in the *Quarterly*, while J. G. Lockhart is said to have written the *Blackwood's* review.

¹ John Wilson Croker, 1780-1857, was one of the leading lights of the *Quarterly Review*. He entered Parliament and was appointed Secretary to the Admiralty by Perceval in 1809, continuing in this office until 1830 in close association with Peel, who had a very high regard for his capacity, Canning and the Duke of Wellington. In 1831 began his duel with Macaulay over the Reform Bill, and the political-literary quarrel was waged with great bitterness on both sides until Croker's final retirement from the *Quarterly* in 1854. Croker is said to have been the original of Rigby in Disraeli's "Coningsby", but little evidence for the more sinister features of the portrait is forthcoming from any reliable source.

Byron repeats the accusation in the well-known stanza from the Eleventh Canto of "Don Juan":

John Keats, who was killed off by one critique,
 Just as he really promised something great,
 If not intelligible, without Greek
 Contrived to talk about the Gods of late,
 Much as they might have been supposed to speak,
 Poor fellow! His was an untoward fate;
 'T is strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
 Should let itself be snuffed out by an article.

while Shelley wrote, "The first effects are described to me to have resembled insanity, and it was by assiduous watching that he was restrained from effecting purposes of suicide. The agony of his sufferings at length produced the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs, and the usual process of consumption appears to have begun." But this was, in Swinburne's words, "the false Keats," who "would have been, had he ever existed, a thing beneath compassion or contempt."

THE QUARTERLY REVIEW ON KEATS

The Quarterly review is not long—barely four pages; and its importance warrants its appearing here almost in full.

"Endymion: A Poetic Romance." By John Keats. London. 1818. pp. 207.

REVIEWERS have been sometimes accused of not reading the works which they affected to criticise. On the present occasion we shall anticipate the author's complaint, and honestly confess that we have not read his work. Not that we have been wanting in our duty—far from it—indeed, we have made efforts almost as superhuman as the story itself appears to be, to get through it; but with the fullest stretch of our perseverance, we are forced to confess that we have not been able to struggle beyond the first of the four books of which this Poetic Romance consists. We should extremely lament this want of energy, or whatever it may be, on our parts, were it not for one consolation—namely, that we are no better acquainted with the meaning of the book through which we have so painfully toiled, than we are with that of the three which we have not looked into.

It is not that Mr. Keats, (if that be his real name, for we almost doubt that any man in his senses would put his real name to such a rhapsody,) it is not, we say, that the author has not powers of language, rays of fancy, and gleams of genius—he has all these; but he is unhappily a disciple of the new school of what has been somewhere called Cockney poetry; which may be defined to consist of the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language.

Of this school, Mr. Leigh Hunt, as we observed in a former number, aspires to be the hierophant. Our readers will recollect the pleasant recipes for harmonious and sublime poetry which he gave us in his preface to "Rimini", and the still more facetious instances of his harmony and sublimity in the verses themselves; and they will recollect above all the contempt of Pope, Johnson, and such-like poetasters and pseudo-critics, which so forcibly contrasted itself with Mr. Leigh Hunt's self-complacent approbation of

—‘all the things itself had wrote
Of special merit though of little note.’

This author is a copyist of Mr. Hunt; but he is more unintelligible, almost as rugged, twice as diffuse, and ten times more tiresome and absurd than his prototype, who though he impudently presumed to seat himself on the chair of criticism, and to measure his own poetry by his own standard, yet generally had a meaning. But Mr. Keats had advanced no dogmas which he was bound to support by examples; his nonsense therefore is quite gratuitous; he writes it for its own sake, and, being bitten by Mr. Leigh Hunt's insane criticism, more than rivals the insanity of his poetry.

Sound but not Sense.

Of the story we have been able to make out but little; it seems to be mythological, and probably relates to the loves of Diana and Endymion; but of this, as the scope of the work has altogether escaped us, we cannot speak with any degree of certainty; and must therefore content ourselves with giving some instances of its diction and versification:—and here again we are perplexed and puzzled.—At first it appeared to us, that Mr. Keats had been amusing himself and wearying his readers

with an immeasurable game at *bouts-rimés*; but, if we recollect rightly, it is an indispensable condition at this play, that the rhymes when filled up shall have a meaning; and our author, as we have already hinted, has no meaning. He seems to us to write a line at random, and then he follows not the thought excited by this line, but that suggested by the *rhyme* with which it concludes. There is hardly a complete couplet inclosing a complete idea in the whole book. He wanders from one subject to another, from the association, not of ideas but of sound, and the work is composed of hemistichs, which, it is quite evident, have forced themselves upon the author by the mere force of the catchwords on which they turn.

We shall select, not as the most striking instance, but as that least liable to suspicion, a passage from the opening of the poem.

—‘Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils,
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead; &c. &c.’

Here it is clear that the word, and not the idea, *moon* produces the simple sheep and their shady *boon*, and that ‘the *dooms* of the mighty dead’ would never have intruded themselves but for the ‘*fair musk-rose blooms*’.

His notions of prosody.

WE come now to the author’s taste in versification. He cannot indeed write a sentence, but perhaps he may be able to spin a line. Let us see. The following are specimens of his prosodial notions of our English heroic metre.

‘Dear as the temple’s self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite.’
‘So plenteously all weed-hidden roots.’
‘Of some strange history, potent to send.’
‘Before the deep intoxication.’
‘Her scarf into a fluttering pavilion.’

‘The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepared——’
‘“Endymion! the cave is secreter
Than the isle of Delos. Echo hence shall stir
No sighs but sigh-warm kisses, or light noise
Of thy combing hand, the while it travelling cloys
And trembles through my labyrinthine hair.”’

Coinage of new words.

BY this time our readers must be pretty well satisfied as to the meaning of his sentences and the structure of his lines: we now present them with some of the new words with which, in imitation of Mr. Leigh Hunt, he adorns our language.

We are told that ‘turtles *passion* their voices,’ (p. 15); that ‘an arbour was *nested*,’ (p. 23); and a lady’s locks ‘*gordian’d* up,’ (p. 32); and to supply the place of the nouns thus verbalized Mr. Keats, with great fecundity, spawns new ones; such as ‘men-slugs and human *serpentry*,’ (p. 41); the ‘*honey-feel* of bliss,’ (p. 45); ‘wives prepare *needments*,’ (p. 13)—and so forth.

Then he has formed new verbs by the process of cutting off their natural tails, the adverbs, and affixing them to their foreheads; thus, ‘the wine out-sparkled,’ (p. 10); the ‘multitude up-followed,’ (p. 11); and ‘night up-took,’ (p. 29). ‘The wind up-blows,’ (p. 32); and the ‘hours are down-sunken,’ (p. 36).

But if he sinks some adverbs in the verbs he compensates the language with adverbs and adjectives which he separates from the parent stock. Thus, a lady ‘whispers *pantingly* and close,’ makes ‘*hushing* signs,’ and steers her skiff into a ‘*ripply* cove,’ (p. 23); a shower falls ‘*refreshfully*,’ (p. 45); and a vulture has a ‘*spreaded* tail,’ (p. 44).

But enough of Mr. Leigh Hunt and his simple neophyte.—If any one should be bold enough to purchase this ‘Poetic Romance,’ and so much more patient, than ourselves, as to get beyond the first book, and so much more fortunate as to find a meaning, we entreat him to make us acquainted with his success; we shall then return to the task which we now abandon in despair, and endeavour to make all due amends to Mr. Keats and to our readers.

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE ON KEATS

The famous Blackwood article on Keats, No. 4 in the series headed "On the Cockney School of Poetry," was supposed to have been written by John Gibson Lockhart, author of the "Life of Sir Walter Scott," though Andrew Lang, who wrote Lockhart's "Life" in 1897 brought some evidence to show that he was not responsible at any rate for the earlier articles in that series. Each article is signed "Z", and headed with a few lines from a somewhat unfortunate poem by one Cornelius Webb, which no doubt gave the satirist the necessary spur of indignation:—

Our talk shall be (a theme we never tire on)
Of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron,
(Our England's Dante)—Wordsworth—HUNT, and KEATS,
The Muses' son of promise; and of what feats
He yet may do.

It was against Leigh Hunt that "Z" was most furious: John Keats was only included, apparently, because he was a disciple and protégé of the editor of the Examiner.

of all the manias of this mad age, the most incurable, as well as the most common, seems to be no other than the *Metro-manie*. The just celebrity of Robert Burns and Miss Baillie has had the melancholy effect of turning the heads of we know not how many farm-servants and unmarried ladies; our very footmen compose tragedies, and there is scarcely a superannuated governess in the island that does not leave a roll of lyrics behind her in her band-box. To witness the disease of any human understanding, however feeble, is distressing; but the spectacle of an able mind reduced to a state of insanity is of course ten times more afflicting. It is with such sorrow as this that we have contemplated the case of Mr. John Keats. This young man appears to have received from nature talents of an excellent, perhaps even of a superior order—talents which, devoted to the purposes of any useful profession, must have rendered him a respectable, if not an eminent citizen. His friends, we understand, destined him to the career of medicine, and he was bound apprentice some years ago to a worthy apothecary in town. But all has been undone by a sudden attack of the

malady to which we have alluded. Whether Mr. John had been sent home with a diuretic or composing draught to some patient far gone in the poetical mania, we have not heard. This much is certain, that he has caught the infection, and that thoroughly. For some time we were in hopes that he might get off with a violent fit or two; but of late the symptoms are terrible. The phrenzy of the "Poems" was bad enough in its way; but it did not alarm us half so seriously as the calm, settled, imperturbable drivelling idiocy of "Endymion." We hope, however, that in so young a person, and with a constitution originally so good, even now the disease is not utterly incurable. Time, firm treatment, and rational restraint, do much for many apparently hopeless invalids; and if Mr. Keats should happen, at some interval of reason, to cast his eye upon our pages, he may perhaps be convinced of the existence of his malady, which, in such cases, is often all that is necessary to put the patient in a fair way of being cured.

The readers of the *Examiner* newspaper were informed, some time ago, by a solemn paragraph, in Mr. Hunt's best style, of the appearance of two new stars of glorious magnitude and splendour in the poetical horizon of the land of Cockaigne. One of these turned out, by and by, to be no other than Mr. John Keats. This precocious adulation confirmed the wavering apprentice in his desire to quit the gallipots, and at the same time excited in his too susceptible mind a fatal admiration for the character and talents of the most worthless and affected of all the versifiers of our time. One of his first productions was the following sonnet, "*written on the day when Mr. Leigh Hunt left prison.*" It will be recollected, that the cause of Hunt's confinement was a series of libels against his sovereign, and that its fruit was the odious and incestuous "Story of Rimini."

What though, for shewing truth to flattered state.

Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he

In his immortal spirit been as free

As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.

Minion of grandeur! think you he did wait?

Think you he nought but prison walls did see,

Till, so unwilling, thou unturn'dst the key?

Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate!

In Spenser's halls! he strayed, and bowers fair,
 Culling enchanted flowers; and he flew
With daring Milton! through the fields of air;
 To regions of his own his genius true
 Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair
 When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew?

The absurdity of thought in this sonnet is, however, if possible, surpassed in another, "*addressed to Haydon*," the painter, that clever, but most affected artist, who as little resembles Raphael in genius as he does in person, notwithstanding the foppery of having his hair curled over his shoulders in the old Italian fashion. In this exquisite piece it will be observed, that Mr. Keats classes together WORDSWORTH, HUNT, and HAYDON, as the three greatest spirits of the age, and that he alludes to himself, and some others of the rising brood of Cockneys, as likely to attain hereafter an equally honourable elevation. Wordsworth and Hunt! what a juxtaposition! The purest, the loftiest, and, we do not fear to say it, the most classical of living English poets, joined together in the same compliment with the meanest, the filthiest, and the most vulgar of Cockney poetasters. No wonder that he who could be guilty of this should class Haydon with Raphael, and himself with Spenser.

Great spirits now on earth are sojourning;
 He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake,
 Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake,
 Catches his freshness from Archangel's wing:
He of the rose, the violet, the spring,
The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake:
 And lo!—whose stedfastness would never take
 A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering.
 And other spirits there are standing apart
 Upon the forehead of the age to come;
 These, these will give the world another heart,
 And other pulses. *Hear ye not the hum*
Of mighty workings? . . .
Listen awhile ye nations, and be dumb.

The nations are to listen and be dumb! and why, good Johnny Keats? because Leigh Hunt is editor of the *Examiner*, and Haydon has painted the judgment of Solomon, and you and Cornelius Webb, and a few more city sparks, are pleased to

look upon yourselves as so many future Shakespeares and Miltons! The world has really some reason to look to its foundations.

Love—and Endymion.

FROM some verses addressed to various amiable individuals of the other sex, it appears, notwithstanding all this gossamer-work, that Johnny's affections are not entirely confined to objects purely ethereal. Take, by way of specimen, the following prurient and vulgar lines, evidently meant for some young lady east of Temple-bar.

Add too, the sweetness
Of thy honied voice; the neatness
Of thine ankle lightly turn'd:
With those beauties, scarce discern'd,
Kept with such sweet privacy,
That they seldom meet the eye
Of the little loves that fly
Round about with eager pry.
Saving when, with freshening lave,
Thou dipp'st them in the taintless wave;
Like twin water lilies, born
In the coolness of the morn.
O, if thou hadst breath'd then,
Now the Muses had been ten.
Couldst thou wish for lineage *higher*
Than twin sister of *Thalia*?
At last for ever, evermore,
Will I call the Graces four.

Who will dispute that our poet, to use his own phrase (and rhyme),

Can mingle music fit for the soft *ear*
Of Lady *Cytherea*.

So much for the opening bud; now for the expanded flower. It is time to pass from the juvenile "Poems," to the mature and elaborate "Endymion, a Poetic Romance." The old story of the moon falling in love with a shepherd, so prettily told by a Roman Classic, and so exquisitely enlarged and adorned by one of the most elegant of German poets, has been seized upon

by Mr. John Keats, to be done with as might seem good unto the sickly fancy of one who never read a single line either of Ovid or of Wieland. If the quantity, not the quality, of the verses dedicated to the story is to be taken into account, there can be no doubt that Mr. John Keats may now claim Endymion entirely to himself. To say the truth, we do not suppose either the Latin or the German poet would be very anxious to dispute about the property of the hero of the "Poetic Romance." Mr. Keats has thoroughly appropriated the character, if not the name. His Endymion is not a Greek shepherd, loved by a Grecian goddess; he is merely a young Cockney rhymester, dreaming a phantastic dream at the full of the moon. Costume, were it worth while to notice such a trifle, is violated in every page of this goodly octavo. From his prototype Hunt, John Keats has acquired a sort of vague idea, that the Greeks were a most tasteful people, and that no mythology can be so finely adapted for the purposes of poetry as theirs. It is amusing to see what a hand the two Cockneys make of this mythology; the one confesses that he never read the Greek tragedians, and the other knows Homer only from Chapman; and both of them write about Apollo, Pan, Nymphs, Muses and Mysteries, as might be expected from persons of their education. We shall not, however, enlarge at present upon this subject, as we mean to dedicate an entire paper to the classical attainments and attempts of the Cockney poets. As for Mr. Keats' "Endymion," it has just as much to do with Greece as it has with "old Tartary the fierce," no man, whose mind has ever been imbued with the smallest knowledge or feeling of classical poetry or classical history, could have stooped to profane and vulgarise every association in the manner which has been adopted by this "son of promise." Before giving any extracts, we must inform our readers, that this romance is meant to be written in English heroic rhyme. To those who have read any of Hunt's poems, this hint might indeed be needless. Mr. Keats has adopted the loose, nerveless versification, and Cockney rhymes of the poet of Rimini; but in fairness to that gentleman, we must add, that the defects of the system are tenfold more conspicuous in his disciple's work than in his own. Mr. Hunt is a small poet, but he is a clever man, Mr. Keats is a still smaller poet, and he is only a

boy of pretty abilities, which he has done everything in his power to spoil.

"Endymion" is then dissected at some length.

AND now, good-morrow to "the Muses' son of Promise;" as for "the feats he yet may do," as we do not pretend to say, like himself, "Muse of my native land am I inspired," we shall adhere to the safe old rule of *pauca verba*. We venture to make one small prophecy, that his bookseller will not a second time venture £50 upon any thing he can write. It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop Mr. John, back to "plasters, pills, and ointment boxes," &c. But, for Heaven's sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of extenuatives and soporifics in your practice than you have been in your poetry.

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, August, 1818.

SHELLEY ON KEATS

To Keats, on "Endymion."

PISA,

27th July, 1820.

I have lately read your 'Endymion' again, and even with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains, though treasures poured forth with indistinct profusion. This people in general will not endure, and that is the cause of the comparatively few copies which have been sold. I feel persuaded that you are capable of the greatest things, so you but will. . . .

To Leigh Hunt, about Keats's projected visit.

11th Nov., 1820.

Where is Keats now? I am anxiously expecting him in Italy, when I shall take care to bestow every possible attention on him. I consider his a most valuable life, and I am deeply interested in his safety. I intend to be the physician both of his body and his soul, to keep the one warm, and to teach the other Greek and Spanish. I am aware, indeed, in part, that I am nourishing a rival who will far surpass me, and this is an additional motive, and will be an added pleasure.

Letters of John Keats,

HAZLITT ON KEATS

Keats a Sensitive Plant.

A CREW of mischievous critics at Edinburgh having affixed the epithet of the *Cockney School* to one or two writers born in the metropolis, all the people in London became afraid of looking into their works, lest they too should be convicted of cockneyism. Oh, brave public! This epithet proved too much for one of the writers in question, and stuck like a barbed arrow in his heart. Poor Keats! What was sport to the town was death to him. Young, sensitive, delicate, he was like

A bud bit by an envious worm,
Ere he could spread his sweet leaves to the air
Or dedicate his beauty to the sun;

and unable to endure the miscreant cry and idiot laugh, withdrew to sigh his last breath in foreign climes.

HAZLITT. *On Living to One's-Self.*

Effeminacy of Keats's Style.

I CANNOT help thinking that the fault of Mr. Keats's poems was a deficiency in masculine energy of style. He has beauty, tenderness, delicacy, in an uncommon degree, but there was a want of strength and substance. His *Endymion* is a very delightful description of the illusions of a youthful imagination given up to airy dreams—we have flowers, clouds, rainbows, moonlight, all sweet sounds and smells, and Oreads and Dryads flitting by—but there is nothing tangible in it, nothing marked or palpable—we have none of the hardy spirit or rigid forms of antiquity. He painted his own thoughts and character, and did not transport himself into the fabulous and heroic ages. There is a want of action, of character, and so far of imagination, but there is exquisite fancy. All is soft and fleshy, without bone or muscle. We see in him the youth without the manhood of poetry. His genius breathed 'vernal delight and joy.' 'Like Maia's son he stood and shook his plumes,' with fragrance filled. His mind was redolent of spring. He had not the fierceness of summer, nor the richness of autumn, and winter he seems not to have known till he felt the icy hand of death!

HAZLITT. *On Effeminacy of Character,*

DE QUINCEY ON KEATS

De Quincey compares Keats with Shelley—not altogether to the former's advantage.

As a man, and viewed in relation to social objects, Keats was nothing. It was as mere an affectation when he talked with apparent zeal of liberty, or human rights, or human prospects, as is the hollow enthusiasm which innumerable people profess for music, or most poets for external nature. For these things Keats fancied that he cared, but in reality, from all I can learn, he cared next to nothing. Upon them, or any of their aspects, he had thought too little, and too indeterminately, to feel for them as personal concerns. Whereas Shelley, from his earliest days, was mastered and shaken by the great moving realities of life, as a prophet is by the burden of wrath or of promise which he has been commissioned to reveal. Had there been no such thing as literature, Keats would have dwindled into a cipher. Shelley, in the same event, would hardly have lost one plume from his crest. It is in relation to literature, and to the boundless questions as to the true and the false arising out of literature and poetry, that Keats challenges a fluctuating interest,—sometimes an interest of strong disgust, sometimes of deep admiration. There is not, I believe, a case on record throughout European Literature where feelings so repulsive to each other have centred in the same individual. The very midsummer madness of affectation, of false vapoury sentiment, and of fantastic effeminacy, seemed to me combined in Keats's "Endymion," when I first saw it, near the close of 1821. The Italian poet Marino had been reputed the greatest master of gossamery affectation in Europe. But *his* conceits showed the palest of rosy blushes by the side of Keats's bloody crimson. Naturally I was discouraged at the moment from looking further. But about a week later, by pure accident, my eye fell upon his "Hyperion." The first feeling was one of incredulity that the two poems could, under any change of circumstances or lapse of time, have emanated from the same mind. The "Endymion" trespasses so strongly against good sense and just feeling that, in order to secure its pardon, we need the whole weight of the imperishable "Hyperion";

which, as Mr. Gilfillan truly says, "is the greatest of poetical torsos." The first belongs essentially to the vilest collections of waxwork filigree or gilt gingerbread. The other presents the majesty, the austere beauty, and the simplicity of a Grecian temple enriched with Grecian sculpture. . . .

DE QUINCEY. *Literary Theory and Criticism.*

CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE ON KEATS

"Poems" by John Keats, 1817.

THE first volume of Keats's minor muse was launched amid the cheers and fond anticipations of all his circle. Every one of us expected (and not unreasonably) that it would create a sensation in the literary world; for such a first production (and a considerable portion of it from a minor) has rarely occurred. The three Epistles and the seventeen sonnets (that upon "first looking into Chapman's Homer" one of them) would have ensured a rousing welcome from our modern-day reviewers. Alas! the book might have emerged in Timbuctoo with far stronger chance of fame and approbation. It never passed to a second edition; the first was but a small one, and that was never sold off. The whole community, as if by compact, seemed determined to know nothing about it. The word had been passed that its author was a Radical; and in those days of "Bible-Crown-and-Constitution" supremacy, he might have had better chance of success had he been an Anti-Jacobin. Keats had not made the slightest demonstration of political opinion; but with a conscious feeling of gratitude for kindly encouragement, he had dedicated his book to Leigh Hunt, Editor of the *Examiner*, a Radical and a dubbed partisan of the first Napoleon; because when alluding to him, Hunt did not always subjoin the fashionable cognomen of "Corsican Monster." Such an association was motive enough with the dictators of that day to thwart the endeavours of a young aspirant who should presume to assert for himself an unrestricted course of opinion.

COWDEN CLARKE, *Recollections of Writers.*

LEIGH HUNT ON KEATS

It was Charles Cowden Clarke who introduced Keats to Leigh Hunt, about 1816, and Hunt who brought him and Shelley together. Keats did not, says Hunt, take to Shelley as kindly as Shelley did to him; and he hints that sensitiveness on the score of his birth inclined him to see a sort of natural enemy in the son of a baronet. An irritable morbidity, due to the hopelessness of recovering health, caused him also to suspect Leigh Hunt of a wish to see him undervalued. "I might as well have been told that I wished to see the flowers or the stars undervalued, or my own heart that loved him," writes Hunt in his Autobiography.

HERE is a young poet giving himself up to his own impressions, and revelling in real poetry for its own sake. He has had his advantages, because others have cleared the way into those happy bowers; but it shows the strength of his natural tendency, that he has not been turned aside by the lingering enticements of a former system, or by the self-love which interests others in enforcing them. We do not, of course, mean to say, that Mr. Keats has as much talent as he will have ten years hence, or that there are no imitations in his book, or that he does not make mistakes common to inexperience;—the reverse is inevitable at his time of life. In proportion to our ideas, or impressions of the images of things, must be our acquaintance with the things themselves. But our author has all the sensitiveness and temperament requisite to receive these impressions; and wherever he has turned hitherto he has felt them deeply. . . .

LEIGH HUNT. *Examiner.*

Keats's personal appearance.

MR. KEATS, when he died, had just completed his four-and-twentieth year. He was under the middle height; and his lower limbs were small in comparison with the upper, but neat and well-turned. His shoulders were very broad for his size: he had a face, in which energy and sensibility were remarkably mixed up, an eager power checked and made patient by ill-health. Every feature was at once strongly cut, and delicately alive. If there was any faulty expression, it was in the mouth, which was not without something of a character of pugnacity.

The face was rather long than otherwise; the upper lip projected a little over the under; the chin was bold, the cheeks sunken; the eyes mellow and glowing; large, dark and sensitive. At the recital of a noble action, or a beautiful thought, they would suffuse with tears, and his mouth trembled. In this, there was ill health as well as imagination, for he did not like these betrayals of emotion; and he had great personal as well as moral courage. His hair, of a brown colour, was fine, and hung in natural ringlets. The head was a puzzle for the phrenologists, being remarkably small in the skull; a singularity which he had in common with Lord Byron and Mr. Shelley, none of whose hats I could get on. Mr. Keats was sensible of the disproportion above noticed, between his upper and lower extremities; and he would look at his hand, which was faded, and swollen in the veins, and say it was the hand of a man of fifty. He was a seven months' child: his mother, who was a lively woman, passionately fond of amusement, is supposed to have hastened her death by too great an inattention to hours and seasons. Perhaps she hastened that of her son.

On "Endymion."

"ENDYMION," it must be allowed, was not a little calculated to perplex the critics. It was a wilderness of sweets, but it was truly a wilderness; a domain of young, luxuriant, uncompromising poetry, where the "weeds of glorious feature" hampered the petty legs accustomed to the lawns and trodden walks, in vogue for the last hundred years; lawns, as Johnson says, "shaven by the scythe, and levelled with the roller;" walks, which being public property, have been re-consecrated, like Kensington Gardens, by the beadle of authority, instead of the Pans and Sylvans. Mr. Wordsworth knew better than the critics, but he did not chuse to say any thing. He stood upon equivocal footing himself, his greatest poetical recommendation arising from the most prosaical action of his life, to wit, his acceptance of the office of Distributor of Stamps. Mr. Keats, meeting him one day at Mr. Haydon's,—the same day when Lamb said that good thing about Voltaire,¹ our young

¹ To a person abusing Voltaire, and indiscreetly opposing his character to that of Jesus Christ, he said admirably well (though he by no means overrates Voltaire, nor wants reverence in the other quarter) that "Voltaire was a very good Jesus Christ for the French."—Leigh Hunt. *On Charles Lamb.*

poet was induced to repeat to the elder one the Hymn to Pan out of "Endymion;" upon which Mr. Wordsworth said it was "a very pretty piece of Paganism." A new poet had come up, who

Had sight of Proteus coming from the sea;

and certainly "the world was not too much with him." But this, which is a thing desired by Lake Poets in their abstraction, is a presumption in the particular, and not to be countenanced. "Such sights as youthful poets dream" must cease, when their predecessors grow old; when they get jealous as fading beauties, and have little annuities for behaving themselves.

LEIGH HUNT. *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries.*

HOOD ON KEATS

Keats had a very considerable influence on the serious poetry of Thomas Hood. The following sonnet was written by Hood in a copy of Keats's "Endymion."

I saw pale Dian, sitting by the brink
Of silver falls, the overflow of fountains
From cloudy steeps; and I grew sad to think
Endymion's foot was silent on those mountains
And he but a hush'd name, that Silence keeps
In dear remembrance,—lonely, and forlorn,
Singing it to herself until she weeps
Tears, that perchance still glisten in the morn:—
And as I mused, in dull imaginings,
There came a flash of garments, and I knew
The awful Muse by her harmonious wings
Charming the air to music as she flew—
Anon there rose an echo through the vale
Gave back Endymion in a dreamlike tale.

BUXTON FORMAN. *John Keats, Vol. I.*

B. W. PROCTER ("BARRY CORNWALL") ON KEATS

of Keats I have little to record. I saw him only two or three times before his departure for Italy. I was introduced to him by Leigh Hunt, and found him very pleasant, and free from all affectation in manner and opinion. Indeed, it would be

difficult to discover a man with a more bright and open countenance. He was always ready to hear and to reply; to discuss, to reason, to admit; and to join in serious talk or common gossip. It has been said that his poetry was affected and effeminate. I can only say that I never encountered a more manly and simple young man.

In person he was short, and had eyes large and wonderfully luminous, and a resolute bearing; not defiant, but well sustained. In common with thousands of others, I profess to be a great admirer of his poetry, which is charming and original; full of sentiment, full of beauty. Some persons prefer it to the verse of Shelley, which is less definite and picturesque, perhaps, but matchless in its resounding harmonies. . . .

B. W. PROCTER. *Recollections of Men of Letters.*

CARLYLE ON KEATS

Carlyle speaks of a "fricassee of dead dog."

MILNES has written this year a book on *Keats*. This remark to make on it: 'An attempt to make us eat dead dog by exquisite currying and cooking.' Won't eat it. A truly unwise little book. The kind of man that Keats was gets ever more horrible to me. Force of hunger for pleasure of every kind, and want of all other force—that is a combination! Such a structure of soul, it would once have been very evident, was a chosen 'Vessel of Hell,' and truly, for ever there is justice in that feeling. At present we try to love and pity, and even worship, such a soul, and find the task rather easy, in our own souls there being enough of similarity. Away with it! There is perhaps no clearer evidence of our universal *immorality* and cowardly untruth than even in such sympathies.

FROUDE. *Carlyle's Life in London.*

Carlyle reflects on the Nature of Poetry.

POETRY, except in such cases as that of Keats, where the whole consists in a weak-eyed maudlin sensibility, and a certain vague random tunefulness of nature, is no separate faculty, no organ which can be superadded to the rest, or disjoined from them; but rather the result of their general harmony and completion.

CARLYLE. *Essay on Burns.*

SYDNEY SMITH

1771-1845



Geo Lyttelton

AUTHOR OF "PLYMLEY'S LETTERS ON THE CATHOLICS."

S Y D N E Y S M I T H

1771-1845

THE witty Canon of St. Paul's, author of "Peter Plymley's Letters," the "Singleton Letters," and many articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, of which he was the first editor, was one of the chief ornaments of the Holland House set. He had some connection with the family, his elder brother "Bobus" having married Caroline Vernon, aunt of the third Lord Holland. (His daughter Saba became the second wife of Sir Henry Holland, Physician in Ordinary to the Queen and Prince Albert, but Sir Henry came from a Knutsford family and was, in fact, a cousin of Mrs. Gaskell.) Sydney Smith himself attributed his constitutional gaiety, which probably stood in the way of his preferment to episcopal rank, to the French blood that came to him from the mother's side.

The following account of the foundation of the *Edinburgh Review* is taken from his Preface to his Collected Works:

When first I went into the Church, I had a curacy in the middle of Salisbury Plain. The Squire of the parish¹ took a fancy to me, and requested me to go with his son to reside at the University of Weimar; before we could get there, Germany became the seat of war, and in stress of politics we put into Edinburgh, where I remained five years. The principles of the French Revolution were then fully afloat, and it is impossible to conceive a more violent and agitated state of society. Among the first persons with whom I became acquainted were, Lord Jeffrey, Lord Murray (late Lord Advocate for Scotland), and Lord Brougham; all of them maintaining opinions upon political subjects a little too liberal for the dynasty of Dundas, then exercising supreme power over the northern division of the island.

One day we happened to meet in the eighth or ninth story or flat in Buccleugh Place, the elevated residence of the then Mr. Jeffrey. I proposed that we should set up a Review; this was acceded to with acclamation. I was appointed editor, and

¹ The parish was Netheravon, the squire, Michael Hicks-Beach.

remained long enough in Edinburgh to edit the first number of the Edinburgh Review. The motto I proposed for the Review was,

“*Tenui musam meditamus avena*”
“We cultivate literature upon a little oatmeal.”

But this was too near the truth to be admitted, and so we took our present grave motto from *Publius Syrus*, of whom none of us, I am sure, had ever read a single line; and so began what has since turned out to be a very important and able journal.

The motto from *Publius Syrus* (for which Horner was responsible) may have something to say with regard to the Edinburgh's early ferocity. It was

Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur.

Sydney Smith's real merits as a writer have been perhaps obscured by his reputation as wit and humorist. In her preface to the “Letters” Mrs. Austin quotes from the letter of a friend: “If Mr. Sydney Smith had not been the greatest and most brilliant of wits, he would have been the most remarkable man of his time for a sound and vigorous understanding and great reasoning powers; and if he had not been distinguished for these, he would have been the most eminent and the purest writer of English.”

Sir Henry Holland, his son-in-law, while endorsing these comments, adds his own opinion:

“I should be inclined to note two other peculiarities of his writings, which have not been enough dwelt upon. One of these is, the *suddenness* with which he enters on his subject. No distant approaches by preface or dissertation. He plunges at once into his argument, and never loiters or lingers in it when he has compassed his conclusion. In no case does he drain a subject to the dregs, but always leaves his readers lamenting that he has come to an end.

“The other peculiarity (akin to the former, and often exceedingly happy in its effect) is what may be termed the *unexpectedness* of his manner of writing. He does not bind himself down to any servile rules of composition, or formal methods of argument. You always feel him to be a free and unshackled enquirer. He passes abruptly from one part of his subject to

another, and, as suddenly, from exquisite wit to the gravest and most profound reason."

His essays and letters are well worth reading again.

LORD BROUGHAM ON SYDNEY SMITH*On Sydney Smith, and the Edinburgh Review.*

SMITH *never was appointed editor*. He read over the articles, and so far may be said to have edited the first number, but regularly constituted editor he never was,—for, with all his other rare and remarkable qualities, there was not a man among us less fitted for such a position. He was a very moderate classic; he had not the smallest knowledge of mathematics or of any science. . . .

He was an admirable joker; he had the art of placing ordinary things in an infinitely ludicrous point of view. I have seen him at dinner at Foston (his living near York) drive the servants from the room with the tears running down their faces, in peals of inextinguishable laughter; but he was too much of a jack-pudding. On one occasion he was the high-sheriff's chaplain, and had to preach the assize sermon. I remember the bar, who were present in York Minster, being rather startled at hearing him give out as his text, "And a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him!" But I am bound to say the sermon was excellent and much to the purpose.

Smith's real share in the Review.

THE share he had in this good work has never been sufficiently appreciated. He was a very remarkable man, a great lover of freedom, but a still more fervent lover of truth. . . . I consider that the Review owed much of its continuing success to the wise advice which Smith administered to Constable at the conclusion of his short reign as *quasi editor*, and during the discussion of the arrangements about to be made with Jeffrey. The substance of this advice was, that a *permanent editor* should be engaged at a liberal salary, and that *every contributor* should be paid ten or twelve guineas a-sheet.

LORD BROUGHAM. *Life and Times.*

THE QUARTERLY REVIEW, MAY, 1809, ON SMITH

In the second number of the Quarterly Sydney Smith was “crucified” (Constable’s phrase) for the publication of two volumes of sermons. A few extracts are appended:

IN the second of these volumes is reprinted the famous Sermon on Toleration, produced by Mr. S. in the summer of 1807. None admire more than ourselves the wise and beneficent system adopted by our country, which, while it secures civil peace by the prudent maintenance of an Established Church, protects the right of conscience, and allows to all the undisturbed profession of religious opinions. This is a language which should be held by all men in all places; and is peculiarly becoming the messenger of that God, who, in the words of Mr. S.’s text, is ‘not the author of confusion, but of peace in all the churches.’

It required some dexterity (and the praise of that dexterity is Mr. S.’s) to dishonour this glorious doctrine by prostituting and degrading it to the meanest of all human objects. The Essay, to which the abused title of a Sermon on Toleration is given, was written and preached for purposes merely political. Our readers are not ignorant that the question of ‘Catholic Emancipation’ was much agitated in the beginning of 1807, and that it was supposed to be one of the causes which led to the dissolution of that administration, of which Lord Grenville was the ostensible head. The flame that was then kindled, Mr. S. thought it a part of his sacred duty to increase. The sermon was accordingly preached at Berkeley Chapel. Troops of political admirers followed it to the Temple Church: and we need not add, that it was then given to the world *at the earnest request* of the preacher’s auditories.

A “conveyance” from Paley.

OF that part of the sermon which is valuable, the praise does not belong to Mr. S. It was at first given to the public without any intimation that its treasures were the property of another; when some ill-natured critic pointed out the source from which the industry of the morning preacher (*apis matinæ*) at Fitzroy Chapel had drawn his wisdom. It had been *conveyed* from a

chapter of Paley on Religious Establishments. The secret being thus discovered, it became necessary that Mr. S. should discover it too:—yet in some way that should best save his character. Accordingly, we have the following very dexterous note, Vol. II, p. 93. ‘This account of a Church Establishment is taken from Paley. Though such truths are so obvious, that a child might state them, if he had no interest in perverting the truth.’

“False and meretricious” celebrity.

IN forming an estimate of the abilities of Mr. S. as they appear in these sermons, our readers will probably have anticipated us. Our opinion of him is lower than we had expected. Indeed, we were well aware that there was something false and meretricious in the sort of celebrity which he has attained;—something, which a wise man would never have allowed himself to acquire; or, having acquired, would be in haste to throw away. He seems incapable of a regular or extended train of reasoning. He works up his paragraphs in a brisk and epigrammatic manner, careless how they agree with each other. . . . He has produced these addresses at various times and on various occasions, and is satisfied if he can talk with the requisite smartness during his fifteen minutes. His inconsistencies are the obvious effects of a want of fixed principles. We turn over page after page without advancing, and are everywhere crossed and impeded by opposing doctrines.

But perhaps the most striking defects of these sermons is the scantiness of matter: and if they are to be the standard by which we must judge Mr. S. his provision of sacred knowledge is slender indeed. Amidst an apparent copiousness, we are surprised at detecting such poverty of thought; and this want of original power is ill compensated by the liveliness with which he would disguise it. To this desire indeed, we attribute his indulgence of so rhetorical and imposing a style. He endeavours too to conceal the sentiments which he adopts, by a phraseology of a peculiar kind; and seeks to mislead his reader’s memory by an overheated appeal to his fancy. Hence come the false glare of his sentences; the forced and antithetical manner in which he points them; and his extravagant and grotesque accumulation of words, till the poor thought

which struggles beneath, is overwhelmed by the fantastic load. . . .

Quarterly Review, May, 1809.

BYRON ON SMITH

And lo! upon that day it came to pass,
I sate next that o'erwhelming son of heaven,
The very powerful parson, Peter Pith,
The loudest wit I e'er was deafen'd with.

I knew him in his livelier London days,
A brilliant diner-out, though but a curate;
And not a joke he cut but earn'd its praise,
Until preferment, coming at a sure rate,
(O providence! how wondrous are thy ways!
Who would suppose thy gifts sometimes obdurate?)
Gave him, to lay the devil who looks o'er Lincoln,
A fat fen vicarage, and nought to think on.

His jokes were sermons, and his sermons jokes;
But both were thrown away amongst the fens;
For wit hath no great friend in aguish folks.
No longer ready ears and short-hand pens
Imbibed the gay bon-mot, or happy hoax:
The poor priest was reduced to common sense,
Or to coarse efforts very loud and long,
To hammer a hoarse laugh from the thick throng.

BYRON. *Don Juan.*

LORD JOHN RUSSELL ON SMITH

In his preface to the sixth volume of Moore's Memoirs, Lord John Russell gives a good description of Sydney Smith's conversational powers.

If it is difficult to convey any notion of the conversation of Sir James Mackintosh, it is hardly possible to describe that of Sydney Smith. There are two kinds of colloquial wit which equally contribute to fame, though not equally to agreeable conversation. The one is like a rocket in a dark air which shoots at once into the sky, and is the more surprising from the previous silence and gloom; the other is like that kind of fire-work which blazes and bursts out in every direction, exploding

at one moment, and shining brightly at another, eccentric in its course, and changing its shape and colour to many forms and many hues. Or, as a dinner is set out with two kinds of champagne, so these two kinds of wit, the still and the sparkling, are to be found in good company. Sheridan and Talleyrand were among the best examples of the first. Hare (as I have heard) and Sydney Smith were brilliant instances of the second. Hare I knew only by tradition; but with Sydney Smith I long lived intimately. His great delight was to produce a succession of ludicrous images: these followed each other with a rapidity that scarcely left time to laugh; he himself laughing louder and with more enjoyment than any one. This electric contact of mirth came and went with the occasion; it cannot be repeated or reproduced. Anything would give occasion to it. For instance, having seen in the newspapers that Sir Aeneas Mackintosh was come to town, he drew such a ludicrous caricature of Sir Aeneas and Lady Dido, for the amusement of their namesake, that Sir James Mackintosh rolled on the floor in fits of laughter, and Sydney Smith, striding across him, exclaimed, "Ruat Justitia!" His powers of fun were at the same time united with the strongest, and most practical common sense. So that while he laughed away seriousness at one minute, he destroyed in the next some rooted prejudice which had braved for a thousand years the battle of reason, and the breeze of ridicule. The letters of Peter Plymley bear the greatest likeness to his conversation; the description of Mr. Isaac Hawkins Brown dancing at the court of Naples in a volcano coat with lava buttons, and the comparison of Mr. Canning to a large blue-bottle fly with its parasites, most resemble the pictures he raised up in social conversation. It may be averred for certain, that in this style he has never been equalled, and I do not suppose he will ever be surpassed.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL. Preface to *Moore's Memoirs, etc.*

MOORE ON SMITH

From Moore's Diary, dated April 10, 1823.

DINED at Rogers'. A distinguished party: S. Smith, Ward, Luttrell, Payne Knight, Lord Aberdeen, Abercrombie, Lord Clifden, &c. Smith particularly amusing. Have rather held

out against him hitherto; but this day he conquered me; and I now am his victim, in the laughing way, for life. His imagination of a duel between two doctors, with oil of croton on the tips of their fingers, trying to touch each other's lips highly ludicrous. What Rogers says of Smith, very true, that whenever the conversation is getting dull, he throws in some touch which makes it rebound, and rise again as light as ever. Ward's artificial efforts, which to me are always painful, made still more so by their contrast to Smith's natural and overflowing exuberance. Luttrell, too, considerably extinguished to-day; but there is this difference between Luttrell and Smith—that after the former, you remember what good things he said, and after the latter, you merely remember how much you laughed.

Under date Nov. 14, 1833.

... SMITH said, that where he felt he had a good and just claim, he considered it always a duty to himself and family to ask, and not to let the world have to say, "If he *did* fall into adversity, that was his own fault." What he had hitherto done was all by his own exertions, as neither himself nor any of his brothers had received a shilling from their father. In talking of the fun he had had in the early times of the "Edinburgh Review," mentioned an article on Ritson, which he and Brougham had written together; and one instance of their joint contribution which he gave me was as follows: "We take for granted (wrote Brougham) that Mr. Ritson supposes Providence to have had some share in producing him—though for what inscrutable purposes (added Sydney) we profess ourselves unable to conjecture."

September 16, 1834.

SYDNEY at breakfast made me actually cry with laughing. I was obliged to start up from the table. In talking of the intelligence and concert which birds have among each other, cranes and crows, &c., showing that they must have some means of communicating their thoughts, he said, "I dare say they make the same remark of us. That old fat crow there (meaning himself) what a prodigious noise he is making! I have no doubt he has some power of communicating," &c. &c.

After pursuing this idea comically for some time, he added, "But we have the advantage of them; they can't put us into pies as we do them; legs sticking up out of the crust," &c. &c. The acting of all this makes two-thirds of the fun of it; the quickness, the buoyancy, the self-enjoying laugh. . . .

18th. At breakfast Sydney enumerated and acted the different sorts of hand-shaking there are to be met with in society. The *digitory* or one finger, exemplified in Brougham, who puts forth his fore finger, and says, with his strong northern accent, "How *arrre* you?" The *sepulchral* or *mortemain*, which was Mackintosh's manner, laying his open hand flat and coldly against yours. The *high official*, the Archbishop of York's, who carries your hand aloft on a level with his forehead. The *rural* or *vigorous* shake, &c. &c. . . .

THOMAS MOORE. *Memoirs, etc.*

MACAULAY ON SMITH

Sydney Smith and Macaulay exchange calls. From a letter to Macaulay's father.

July 21, 1826.

. . . MR. SMITH wished to see me, and was in my room below . . . Down I went, and to my utter amazement beheld the Smith of Smiths, Sydney Smith, alias Peter Plymley. I had forgotten his very existence till I discerned the queer contrast between his black coat and his snow-white head, and the equally curious contrast between the clerical amplitude of his person, and the most unclerical wit, whim, and petulance of his eye. . . . I am very well pleased at having this opportunity of becoming better acquainted with a man who, in spite of innumerable affectations and oddities, is certainly one of the wittiest and most original writers of our times.

July 26, 1826. . .

. . . SYDNEY SMITH brought me to York on Monday morning. . . . We parted with many assurances of goodwill, I have really taken a great liking to him. He is full of wit, humour, and shrewdness. He is not one of those show-talkers who reserve all their good things for special occasions. It seems to be his greatest luxury to keep his wife and daughters laughing for

two or three hours every day. His notions of law, government, and trade are surprisingly clear and just. His misfortune is to have chosen a profession at once above him and below him. Zeal would have made him a prodigy; formality and bigotry would have made him a bishop; but he could neither rise to the duties of his order, nor stoop to its degradations.

Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay.

H. CRABB ROBINSON ON SMITH

Crabb Robinson chats with Sydney Smith, but is not much impressed. A PARTY at Miss Rogers' in the evening. Among those present were Milman, Lyell, and Sydney Smith. With the last-named I chatted for the first time. His faunlike face is a sort of promise of a good thing when he does but open his lips. He said nothing that from an indifferent person would be recollected. The new *British and Foreign Review* was spoken of as set up by a rich man—Beaumont. "Hitherto," said Sydney Smith, "it was thought that Lazarus, not Dives, should set up a Review. The Edinburgh Review was written by Lazzaroni."

Diary, etc., of H. Crabb Robinson, May 16, 1836.

CARLYLE ON SMITH

Carlyle meets Sydney Smith, not under the best auspices, and puts down his candid opinion of the man in his Journal.

THE world looks often quite spectral to me; sometimes, as in Regent Street the other night (my nerves being all shattered), quite hideous, discordant, almost infernal. I had been at Mrs. Austin's, heard Sydney Smith for the first time guffawing, other persons prating, jargoning. To me through these thin cobwebs Death and Eternity sate glaring. . . . Smith, a mass of fat and muscularity, with massive Roman nose, piercing hazel eyes, huge cheeks, shrewdness and fun, not humour or even wit, seemingly without soul altogether.

FROUDE. *Carlyle's Life in London.*

Carlyle and Sydney Smith once more. From a conversation between Carlyle and William Allingham.

c. spoke of Sydney Smith, to whom he was able to give no praise at all, 'The nature of true *Wit* is very much misunder-

stood. Sydney said nothing worth remembering. He said "it took a surgical operation to get a joke into a Scotchman's head;" the thing is, that what Sydney presented was not a joke worth admitting into any one's head, and the Scotchman refused to have anything to do with it. The Scotch are a people with a large appreciation of fun very generally among them. . . . I remember seeing Sydney Smith setting himself to make a company laugh, and I left him there at it, reflecting what a wretched ambition it was in any man.'

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM. *A Diary.*

HARRIET MARTINEAU ON SMITH

IT was at Lord Murray's table that Sydney Smith told me of the fun the Edinburgh reviewers used to make of their work. I taxed him honestly with the mischief they had done by their ferocity and cruel levity at the outset. It was no small mischief to have silenced Mrs. Barbauld; and how much more utterance they may have prevented, there is no saying. . . . Spirits were broken, hearts were sickened, and authorship was cruelly discouraged by the savage and reckless condemnations passed by the Edinburgh Review in its early days. 'We *were* savage,' replied Sydney Smith. 'I remember' (and it was plain he could not help enjoying the remembrance) 'how Brougham and I sat trying one night how we could exasperate our cruelty to the utmost. We had got hold of a poor nervous little vegetarian, who had put out a poor silly little book; and when we had done our review of it, we sat trying,'—(and here he joined his finger and thumb as if dropping from a phial) 'to find one more chink, one more crevice, through which we might drop in one more drop of verjuice, to eat into his bones.' . . . In the midst of his jocose talk, Sydney Smith occasionally became suddenly serious, when some ancient topic was brought up, or some life-enduring sensibility touched; and his voice, eye, and manner at such times disposed one to tears almost as much as his ordinary discourse did to laughter.

A whimsical introduction.

AT a great music-party, where the drawing-rooms and stair-cases were one continuous crowd, the lady who had conveyed

me fought her way to my seat,—which was, in consideration of my deafness, next to Malibran, and near the piano. My friend brought a message which Sydney Smith had passed up the staircase;—that he understood we desired one another's acquaintance, and that he was awaiting it at the bottom of the stairs. He put it to my judgment whether I, being thin, could not more easily get down to him, than he, being stout, could get up to me: and he would wait five minutes for my answer. I really could not go, under the circumstances. . . . So Mr Smith sent me a good-night, and promise to call on me, claiming this negotiation as a proper introduction. He came, and sat down, broad and comfortable, in the middle of my sofa, with his hands on his stick, as if to support himself in a vast development of voice; and then he began, like the great bell of St. Paul's, making me start at the first stroke. He looked with shy dislike at my trumpet, for which there was truly no occasion. I was more likely to fly to the furthest corner of the room. It was always his boast that I did not want my trumpet when he talked with me.

His essential good nature.

I DO not believe that any body ever took amiss his quizzical descriptions of his friends. I am sure I never did: and when I now recall his fun of that sort, it seems to me too innocent to raise an uneasy feeling. There were none, I believe, whom he did not quizz; but I never heard of any hurt feelings. He did not like precipitate speech; and among the fastest talkers in England were certain of his friends and acquaintance;—Mr. Hallam, Mr. Empson, Dr. Whewell, Mr. Macaulay and myself. None of us escaped his wit. His account of Mr. Empson's method of out-pouring stands, without the name, in Lady Holland's Life of her father. His praise of Macaulay is well known;—‘Macaulay is improved! Macaulay improves! I have observed in him of late,—flashes of silence!’ His account of Whewell is something more than wit: ‘Science is his forte: omniscience is his foible.’ As for his friend Hallam, he knew he might make free with his characteristics, of oppugnancy and haste among others, without offence. In telling us what a blunder he himself made in going late to a dinner-party, and describing how far the dinner had proceeded, and how every

body was engaged, he said, 'And there was Hallam, with his mouth full of cabbage and contradiction.'

HARRIET MARTINEAU. *Autobiography*.

R. H. BARHAM¹ ON SMITH

His use of clerical technicalities.

NO ONE at all familiar with the writings and conversation of that extraordinary man, Mr. Sydney Smith, can have failed to remark the professional turn his wit is apt to take. His frequent and irresistibly ludicrous allusions to the technicalities with which he was particularly concerned leave characteristic traces upon well-nigh every matter which he takes in hand. The *Peter Plymley* letters, and those addressed to Archdeacon Singleton, abound in this sort of fun.

At a dinner at Charles Dickens's, Dec. 2, 1843.

SYDNEY SMITH gave an account of Colburn's calling upon him with an introduction from Bulwer. The bibliopole, he said, opened with a condolence, delicately conveyed, on his recent losses in American securities, and then proposed, by way of repairing them, the production of a novel in three volumes, for which he would be most happy to treat on liberal terms.

"Well, Sir," said Mr. Smith, after some seeming consideration, "if I do so I can't travel out of my own line—*ne sutor ultra crepidam*, you know—I must have an archdeacon for my hero, to fall in love with the pew-opener, with the clerk for a confidant—tyrannical interference of the churchwardens—clandestine correspondence concealed under the hassocks—appeal to the parishioners, &c., &c."

"With that, Sir," said Mr. Colburn, "I would not presume to interfere; I would leave it all entirely to your own inventive genius."

"Well, Sir," returned the canon, with urbanity, "I am not prepared to come to terms at present; but if ever I do undertake such a work, you shall certainly have the refusal."

Life and Letters of Rev. R. H. Barham.

¹ Minor Canon of St. Paul's and author of the "Ingoldsby Legends."

MARIA EDGEWORTH ON SMITH

From a letter to his daughter.

I HAVE not the absurd presumption to think your father would leave London or Combe Florey, for Ireland, *voluntarily*; but I wish some Irish bishopric were forced upon him, and that his own sense of national charity and humanity would forbid him to refuse. Then, obliged to reside amongst us, he would see, in the twinkling of an eye (such an eye as his), all our manifold grievances up and down the country. One word, one *bon mot* of his, would do more for us, I guess, than Mr. ——'s four hundred pages, and all the like, with which we have been bored. One letter from Sydney Smith on the affairs of Ireland, with his *name* to it, and after having *been there*, would do more for us than his letters did for America and England;—a bold assertion, you will say, and so it is; but I *calculate* that Pat is a far better subject for wit than Jonathan; it only plays round Jonathan's head, but it goes to Pat's heart,—to the very bottom of his heart, where he loves it; and he don't care whether it is for or against him, so that it is *real* wit and fun. Now Pat would doat upon your father, and kiss the rod with all his soul, he would,—the lash just lifted,—when he'd see the laugh on the face, the kind smile, that would tell him it was all for his good.

Your father would lead Pat (for he'd never drive him) to the world's end, and maybe to common sense at the end. . . .

LADY HOLLAND. *Memoir of Sydney Smith.*

THOMAS CARLYLE

1795-1881

THOMAS CARLYLE

1795-1881

MOST readers, at this time, should have at least a superficial acquaintance with the life of Thomas Carlyle. He has been more written about, and in more widely different aspects, than almost any human being of the nineteenth century. I do not know how many lives, appreciations, memoirs and reminiscences, concerning this one man and his work, may now exist. At the close of the last century there were estimated to be some two thousand; and since then Mr. David Alec Wilson, with several others, has added many volumes to the lengthening tale.

Carlyle was born on December 4th, 1795, "in a little cupboard of a room, 9 ft. by 5 ft., over the arch at Ecclefechan," in Annandale. His father was a stonemason, who had become a small farmer: his mother, whose maiden name was Janet Aitken, had been a domestic servant. His kindred were Annandale peasantry, but in the fifteenth century there had been a Lord Carlyle of Torthorwald, from whom, in later years, a Dumfries antiquary traced Thomas Carlyle's descent with apparent success. The document was received with much amusement when it reached Cheyne Row, but Carlyle himself, no mean genealogist, was inclined to believe in the correctness of this family tree. Correct or not, he was not the man to lay too much stress on noble birth: for him it was sufficient that in his mother he had "a woman of the fairest descent—that of the pious, the just, and the wise," and that his father was a man who walked "as in the full presence of heaven, and hell, and the judgment," with a slight reservation, *more Scotorum*, in favour of the two latter. From his mother he learned to read: with his father he began the study of arithmetic at the age of five. From that source, too, he drew his deep-seated hatred of all scamped work, of shams, and of any perversion of "the eternal verities."

Carlyle went to Edinburgh University, after education at Annan Grammar School, with a view to the ministry—the common goal of a promising son in the house of a Scottish

peasant. But in the meanwhile he took, like so many other eminent writers, to school-mastering as a stop-gap, first at Annan and then, on the recommendation of his friend Edward Irving, at Kirkcaldy. It was through Irving that he first met Jane Baillie Welsh, whom he married in October, 1826. About that marriage, and its results, enough has been said: readers can choose for themselves whether they will follow Froude or Charles Norton. After some four years, spent at Comely Bank, Edinburgh, or at Craigenputtock, Carlyle made his first descent upon London, the MS. of "Sartor Resartus" in his bag. Mrs. Carlyle had pronounced this book "a work of genius," and she was a less partial critic than are most wives of literary men. But he could get no publisher to produce it, though Fraser made a generous offer to print if the author would "give him a sum not exceeding £150 sterling." Eventually, in May, 1833, Carlyle wrote once more to Fraser, offering to cut the book up into strips for publication in his magazine, and this offer was at length accepted. In *Fraser's Magazine* the book was not exactly a success: indeed, in a not too serious publication of this kind nothing could well have been more out of place. But the "strips" attracted attention in America; and some sixty copies were made up by the printer from the magazine sheets, and bound up in book form, with the words "Reprinted for Friends" on the title-page. Not until 1838 was a real English edition produced, 500 copies being printed by Messrs. Saunders and Ottley on the half-profit system.

In 1834 the Carlysles had settled finally in London, in the Chelsea house at 24 Cheyne Row, which has now become a place of pilgrimage. There the Sage of Chelsea passed the remainder of his years: there he wrote "The French Revolution," "Cromwell," and "Frederick the Great": there he was visited by that remarkable pair Lady Blessington and D'Orsay, and a host of other notables: there he suffered from the crowing of cocks and other almost irremediable evils. A very fierce light has beat upon that little house ever since he died on February 4th, 1881, after surviving his wife nearly fifteen years.

JOHN STERLING ON CARLYLE

In a letter to Carlyle about "Sartor," calling attention to certain faults of language.

AND first as to the language. A good deal of this is positively barbarous. "Environment," "vestural," "stertorous," "visualised," "complected," and others to be found I think in the first twenty pages,—are words, so far as I know, without any authority; some of them contrary to analogy; and none repaying by their value the disadvantage of novelty. To these must be added new and erroneous locutions: "whole other tissues" for *all the other*, and similar uses of the word *whole*; "orients" for *pearls*: "lucid" and "lucent" employed as if they were different in meaning; "hulls" perpetually for *coverings*, it being a word hardly used, and then only for the husk of a nut; "to insure a man of misapprehension;" "talented," a mere newspaper and hustings word, invented, I believe, by O'Connell.

I must also mention the constant recurrence of some words in a quaint and queer connection, which gives a grotesque and somewhat repulsive mannerism to many sentences. Of these the commonest offender is "quite;" which appears in almost every page, and gives at first a droll kind of emphasis; but soon becomes wearisome. "Nay," "manifold," "cunning enough significance," "faculty" (meaning a man's rational or moral power), "special," "not without," haunt the reader as if in some uneasy dream which does not rise to the dignity of nightmare. Some of these strange mannerisms fall under the general head of a singularity peculiar, so far as I know, to Teufelsdröckh. For instance, that of the incessant use of a sort of odd superfluous qualification of his assertions; which seems to give the character of deliberateness and caution to the style, but in time sounds like mere trick or involuntary habit. "Almost" does more than yeoman's, *almost* slave's service in this way. Something similar may be remarked of the use of the double negative by way of affirmation.

CARLYLE. *Life of Sterling.*

Carlyle printed one or two opinions of "Sartor" at the close of the book, pour encourager les autres. This is from what he called the

"Highest Bookseller's Taster," i.e. Mr. John Murray's reader, believed to have been Lockhart. The opinion, he pointed out, was altogether more favourable than that of the *Athenæum* and several other papers, commenting on the book after publication.

Taster to Bookseller.—“The Author of *Teufelsdröckh* is a person of talent; his work displays here and there some felicity of thought and expression, considerable fancy and knowledge; but whether or not it would take with the public seems doubtful. For a *jeu d'esprit* of that kind it is too long: it would have suited better as an essay or article than as a volume. The Author has no great tact; his wit is frequently heavy; and reminds one of the German baron who took to leaping on tables, and answered that he was learning to be lively. *Is the work a translation?*”

Quoted in CARLYLE. *Sartor Resartus.*

JEFFREY ON CARLYLE

Letter to Carlyle from Jeffrey on receipt of “The French Revolution”.

MY DEAR CARLYLE,

A thousand thanks for your book of the French Revolution. . . . It is a book, written most emphatically in your own manner, and yet likely to be very generally read, and which cannot be read anywhere without leaving the impression that the author (whatever else may be thought of him) is a man of genius and originality, and capable of still greater things than he has done even here. It is no doubt a very strange piece of work, and is really, as Coleridge I think said of something else, like reading a story by flashes of lightning! It is beyond all question the most *poetical* history that the world has ever seen, and the most moral also, though perhaps not the fullest of wisdom. The descriptions are the finest things in it, and next, the sentiments, especially those of a soft, indulgent and relenting character, which are generally full of truth and beauty, and it *must* be owned outnumber all the others. Your ratiocinations (as those of poets are apt to be) are less satisfactory, and not very intelligible.

FROUDE. *Carlyle's Life in London*

EDGAR ALLAN POE ON CARLYLE

Carlyle and Obscurity.

MR. TENNYSON is quaint only; he is never, as some have supposed him, obscure—except, indeed, to the uneducated, whom he does not address. Mr. Carlyle, on the other hand, is obscure only; he is seldom, as some have imagined him, quaint. So far he is right; for although quaintness, employed by a man of judgment and genius, may be made auxiliary to a *poem*, whose true thesis is beauty, and beauty alone, it is grossly, and even ridiculously, out of place in a work of prose. But in his obscurity it is scarcely necessary to say that he is wrong. Either a man intends to be understood, or he does not. If he write a book which he intends *not* to be understood, we shall be very happy indeed not to understand it; but if he write a book which he means to be understood, and, in this book, be at all possible pains to prevent us from understanding it, we can only say that he is an ass—and this, to be brief, is our private opinion of Mr. Carlyle, which we now take the liberty of making public.

EDGAR ALLAN POE. *Criticisms.*

H. CRABB ROBINSON ON CARLYLE

On the "French Revolution."

THEN I am slowly reading Carlyle's "French Revolution," which should be called rhapsodies—not a history. Some one said, a history in flashes of lightning. And provided I take only small doses, and not too frequently, it is not merely agreeable, but fascinating. It is just the book one should buy, to muse over and spell, rather than read through. For it is not English, but a sort of original compound from that Indo-Teutonic primitive tongue which philologists now speculate about, mixed up by Carlyle *more suo*.

Diary, etc., of Henry Crabb Robinson.

FELICIA HEMANS ON CARLYLE

From a letter dated Aug. 27, 1832.

I THANK you for directing me to the paper on Boswell's Johnson in Fraser: had it not been for your recommendation I

should never have opened the magazine. . . . But this one article, with its manly, sincere, true English feeling, did indeed well repay me; I prefer it to anything of Carlyle's since that delightful paper on Burns: but I must own I am sometimes out of patience with the fantastic *falso*-Gothic of his style; it makes all his writings seem like a very bad translation of fine German thoughts. . . .

H. F. CHORLEY. *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans.*

LEIGH HUNT ON CARLYLE

Leigh Hunt and Carlyle both settled in Chelsea (if indeed the former can ever be said to have settled anywhere) about the same time. Hunt clearly had a considerable admiration for Carlyle, who seemed to him to possess, among other enviable attributes, "the finest eyes, in every sense of the word, which I have ever seen in a man's head (and I have seen many fine ones)."

HERE, also, I became acquainted with Thomas Carlyle, one of the kindest and best, as well as most eloquent of men; though in his zeal for what is best he sometimes thinks it incumbent on him to take not the kindest tone, and in his eloquent demands of some hearty uncompromising creed on our parts, he does not quite set the example of telling us the amount of his own.

The vexed question of his style.

MR. CARLYLE adopted a peculiar semi-German style, from the desire of putting thoughts on his paper instead of words, and perhaps of saving himself some trouble in the process. I feel certain that he does it from no other motive. . . .

His essential kindness of heart.

I BELIEVE that what Mr. Carlyle loves better than his fault-finding, with all its eloquence, is the face of any human creature that looks suffering, and loving, and sincere; and I believe further, that if the fellow-creature were suffering only, and neither loving nor sincere, but had come to a pass of agony in this life, which put him at the mercies of some good man for some last help and consolation towards his grave, even at the risk of loss to repute, and a sure amount of pain and vexa-

tion, that man, if the groan reached him in its forlornness, would be Thomas Carlyle.

LEIGH HUNT. *Autobiography.*

THE QUARTERLY REVIEW, SEPT., 1840, ON CARLYLE

On Carlyle's Works—including “Critical and Miscellaneous Essays” (4 vols.), “The French Revolution, a History” (3 vols.), “Sartor Resartus,” and “Chartism.”

THESE remarkable volumes contain many grave errors: they exhibit vagueness, and misconception, and apparently total ignorance in points of the utmost importance. They profess to be on subjects of ethics, philosophy, and religion, and yet, notwithstanding a plausible phraseology scattered here and there, they make no profession of a definite Christianity; and if it were fair to put hints and general sentiments together, and to charge the writer with the conclusions to which they probably will bring his readers, we should be compelled to describe them as a new profession of Pantheism. Yet there is so much truth in them, and so many evidences, not only of an inquiring and deep-thinking mind, but of a humble, trustful, and affectionate heart, that we have not the slightest inclination to speak of them otherwise than kindly. We are very willing to believe that what is false and bad belongs to the evil circumstances of the day —what is good and true to the author himself; and to hope that more light and knowledge will bring him right at last, since already he has advanced so far in defiance of the difficulties around him.

His style again.

LET us hear what he says, and in his own words, for Mr. Carlyle's words are not the least of his peculiarities. To use his own description of the Marquis of Mirabeau —

‘He has the indisputablest ideas; but then his style! In very truth it is the strangest of styles, though one of the richest; a style full of originality, picturesqueness, sunny vigour; but all cased and slated over threefold, in metaphor and trope; distracted into tortuosities, dislocations; starting out into crotchets, cramp-turns, quaintnesses, and hidden satire, which

the French herd had no ear for. Strong meat too tough for babes.'

To this peculiarity of writing we attribute not a little of the interest which Mr. Carlyle's writings have excited. Readers are sick of the weak, vapid slops with which the press is now inundated, when every one who can spell and write, and couple verbs with nominative cases, thinks it his duty to publish. The general correctness of style at present is a remarkable fact. At the time when Aristotle and Plato *thought*, very few of their countrymen could *write* grammatically: and Aristotle himself lays no little stress on correct syntax as a necessary but rare excellence in an orator. At present, when *no one thinks, every one writes* and speaks correctly. In fact, we have been so busy with writing and speaking that we have had no time to think. But Mr. Carlyle has disdained the easy-beaten track, and struck out a new taste in writing, combining, as we had almost said, all possible faults, and yet not unlikely to become popular. We have no intention of relapsing into the superficial criticisms of a by-gone day, and regarding style as the most important part of composition. But Mr. Carlyle himself knows, and has taken pains to illustrate a great truth, that between the internal spirit of thought and the external form into which it is cast, there is a vital connexion, as between soul and body. If the spirit is clear, simple, unaffected, unambitious, equable, earnest, and conscious of truth and sincerity, the words which it utters, even though unpolished and illiterate, will present a similar perspicuity, simplicity, and natural eloquence. There will be few of what are called quaintnesses—no flippancies—no strange, abrupt transitions from high to low, from the solemn to the ludicrous—little that is grotesque. Such a man will not deal with words as with counters, which he may toss about and huddle together at random, merely to express his own chance conceptions;—he will use them with caution and reverence as living things, which cannot be emptied of their own power, or be thrown to the world to be the passive symbols of him who uses them, but have their own significancy, and do their own work, and enter into the minds of others to turn and bend them in a mysterious way, so that he who deals with words is dealing with things, and not only with things, but

persons. His very language will be to him as a living being, as a minister of God, with which he dares not trifle; but must act towards it reverently, and send it out on its mission with a chastened and quiet heart. So men in the presence of their superiors compose their countenance and dress into order and simplicity; and just as we should judge of the character of a state-officer who, when engaged in some high duty, appeared before his sovereign with a torn or soiled dress, or some strange fanciful costume of his own invention—we judge of a writer who, when employed in conveying truth to the public mind, is neglectful of the dress in which he clothes it, or forces it into some uncouth, misshapen and tangled masquerade habit, which, if it indicates vigour and wealth, shows the one chiefly by convulsions, and the other by an ill regulated extravagance. It was Basil, we think, who prognosticated the apostasy of Julian while he was yet a student at Athens, because he twisted about his head and never looked stedfastly at anything. Ambrose refused to ordain one of his own officers, who afterwards lapsed into Arianism, because he walked conceitedly and irregularly; and words have also their physiognomy, and thinking men may judge by them.

Quarterly Review. Sept., 1840.

THE ATHENÆUM ON CARLYLE

In Carlyle's "Reminiscences" he refers to the following Athenæum review of the "French Revolution," which a "foolish young neighbour, not an ill-disposed" had apparently sent him for his comfort or edification. "I read it," writes Carlyle, "without pain, or pain at least to signify; laid it aside for a day or two; then one morning, in some strait about our breakfast tea-kettle, slipt the peccant number under that, and had my cup of excellent hot tea from it." By which act, he appears to think, he settled the Athenæum for all time.

ORIGINALITY of thought is unquestionably the best excuse for writing a book; originality of style is a rare and refreshing merit; but it is paying rather dear for one's whistle to qualify for obtaining it in the university of Bedlam. Originality, without justness of thought, is but novelty of error; and originality of style, without sound taste and discretion, is sheer

affectation. Thus, as ever, the *corruptio optimi* turns out to be *pessima*; the abortive attempt to be more than nature has made us, and to add a cubit to our stature, ends by placing us below what we might be, if contented with being simply and unaffectedly ourselves. There is not, perhaps, a more decided mark of the decadence of literature than the frequency of such extravagance.

The applicability of these remarks to the History of the French Revolution, now before us, will be understood by such of our readers as are familiar with Mr. Carlyle's contributions to our periodical literature. But it is one thing to put forth a few pages of quaintness, neologism, and a whimsical coxcombry; and another to carry such questionable qualities through three long volumes of misplaced persiflage and flippancy pseudo-philosophy. To such a pitch of extravagance and absurdity are these peculiarities exalted in the volumes before us that we should pass them over in silence, as altogether unworthy of criticism, if we did not know that the rage for German literature may bring such writing into fashion with the ardent and unreflecting.

Athenæum. May 20, 1837.

B. W. PROCTER ("BARRY CORNWALL") ON CARLYLE

On Thomas Carlyle, fresh from Scotland.

MR. THOMAS CARLYLE, when he was introduced by Edw. Irving to Mr. —'s family (of which I almost formed a part),¹ in 1823, was fresh from Scotland. He was then already author of the "Life of Schiller;" and his strong German tendencies were already formed. He had grave features, a brown, florid complexion, and a simple, manly manner, not depending on cultivation so much as on the internal thoughts which gave it motion and character. I found him very sensible and pleasant; having some peculiar opinions, indeed, with which, it must be owned, I did not much disagree.

There can be no doubt that Mr. Carlyle is a very original thinker, quick, deep, and in many things differing from all other men. Whether he be right or not, in all cases, I do not

¹ Clearly the Basil Montagu family. Procter married Miss Skepper, daughter of Mrs. Montagu by her first marriage.

pretend to offer any opinion. In general, the chance is in favour of the greater number; but not always, I suspect, in such themes as he has taken upon himself to discuss. He is a great master of pathos; and he impresses upon certain abstract words and phrases a weight of meaning that exceeds that of any other writer. . . . I am afraid that he sometimes exhibits too much respect for mere power.

Mr. Carlyle's style, which is at first repulsive, becomes in the end very attractive. His humour, although grave, is not saturnine: some of his graver epigrams, indeed, pierce at once to the very heart of a subject. He worships the hero; yet he is in general thoroughly radical. He loves the poor worker in letters, the peasant, the farmer with his horny hand, the plain speaker, the bold speaker; yet he has no pity for the negro, who, he says, should submit to slavery because he is not fit for freedom. It follows from this, that the man must remain poor who has not obvious means to achieve riches, and that oppression and misfortune are reasonable decrees of fate, against which our feelings should not cavil or rebel. Mahomet the prophet, and Cromwell the soldier, shine in his list of heroes; and he loves the real worker. He hates falsehood, and laziness, and puffery; and he has little or no respect for merely rich and titled people. The only exceptions to this, his ordinary religion, are Frederick surnamed the Great, and his father, who was also great in the Tobacco Parliament, but not elsewhere in the common world. . . .

B. W. PROCTER. *Recollections of Men of Letters.*

J. S. MILL ON CARLYLE

Mill to Sterling, October, 1831.

ANOTHER acquaintance which I have recently made is that of Mr. Carlyle. . . . I have long had a very keen relish for his articles in the Edinburgh and Foreign Reviews, which I formerly thought to be such consummate nonsense; and I think he improves upon a closer acquaintance. He does not seem to me so entirely the reflection or shadow of the great German writers as I was inclined to consider him; although undoubtedly his mind has derived from their inspiration whatever breath of life is in it. He seems to me as a man who has

had his eyes unsealed, and who now looks round him and sees the aspects of things with his own eyes, but by the light supplied by others; not the pure light of day, but by another light compounded of the same simple rays, but in different proportions. He has by far the widest liberality and tolerance (not in the sense which Coleridge justly disavows, but in the good sense) that I have met with in any one; and he differs from most men, who see as much as he does into the defects of the age, by a circumstance greatly to his advantage in my estimation, that he looks for a safe landing *before* and not *behind*; he sees that if we could replace things as they once were, we should only retard the final issue, as we should in all human probability go on just as we then did, and arrive again at the very place where we now stand.

J. S. MILL. *Letters.*

SOUTHEY ON CARLYLE

From a letter to the Right Hon. C. W. W. Wynn, M.P., dated May 24, 1837. Southey gives his opinion of the "French Revolution."

HAVE you seen Carlyle's "French Revolution?"—a book like which there was nothing in our language before, nor is likely to be again. Yet in spite of its ultra-Germanism and Pindaric prose, there is a great deal of wisdom in it and a great deal of good feeling, alloyed with not a few crotchety opinions. Withal I have not often read a book that interested me so much—the more, no doubt, because of the interest which that tremendous course of events excited when we read of them day by day.

WARTER. *Letters of Robert Southey.*

WORDSWORTH ON CARLYLE

On Aug. 16, 1841, Wordsworth wrote this letter to Professor Reed, in which he expresses his opinion both of Emerson and Carlyle.

... do you know Miss Peabody of Boston? She has just sent me, with the highest eulogy, certain essays of Mr. Emerson. Our Mr. Carlyle and he appear to be what the

French used to call *esprits forts*, though the French idols showed their spirit after a somewhat different fashion. Our two present Philosophes, who have taken a language which they suppose to be English for their vehicle, are verily 'par nobile fratum,' and it is a pity that the weakness of our age has not left them exclusively to this appropriate reward—mutual admiration. Where is the thing that now passes for philosophy at Boston to stop?

WORDSWORTH. *Prose Works.*

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM ON CARLYLE

To R. W. Emerson, Oct. 12, 1851.

CARLYLE's company I enjoy immensely, and his wife's too I like. Amidst his atmosphere, frowns and laughter, is the finest upland exercise, climbing rocks, and racing half-rolling down hillocks. Knowing him, too, his books have become twice as enjoyable; one can see real fire spurting in every emphasis, and recognise undoubtingly the faintest sly twinkle of humour, will o' the wisps and volcanos together! Yet his books also seem but pails of water from a river (I have got out of my element in the simile)—and I can say that of no one else that I have seen as yet.

Letters to William Allingham.

HARRIET MARTINEAU ON CARLYLE

An attempt at an analysis of Carlyle.

I HAVE seen Carlyle's face under all aspects, from the deepest gloom to the most reckless or most genial mirth; and it seemed to me that each mood would make a totally different portrait. The sympathetic is by far the finest, in my eyes. His excess of sympathy has been, I believe, the master-pain of his life. He does not know what to do with it, and with its bitterness, seeing that human life is full of pain to those who look out for it: and the savageness which has come to be a main characteristic of this singular man is, in my opinion, a mere expression of his intolerable sympathy with the suffering. He cannot express his love and pity in natural acts, like other

people; and it shows itself too often in unnatural speech. But to those who understand his eyes, his shy manner, his changing colour, his sigh, and the constitutional *pudeur* which renders him silent about every thing that he feels the most deeply, his wild speech and abrupt manner are perfectly intelligible. I have felt to the depths of my heart what his sympathy was in my days of success and prosperity and apparent happiness without drawback; and again in sickness, pain, and hopelessness of being ever at ease again: I have observed the same strength of feeling towards all manner of sufferers; and I am confident that Carlyle's affections are too much for him, and the real cause of the 'ferocity' with which he charges himself, and astonishes others.

Nerves and dyspepsia.

WHEN I knew him familiarly, he rarely slept, was woefully dyspeptic, and as variable as possible in mood. When my friend and I entered the little parlour at Cheyne Row, our host was usually miserable. Till he got his coffee, he asked a lot of questions, without waiting for answers, and looked as if he was on the rack. After tea, he brightened and softened, and sent us home full of admiration and friendship, and sometimes with a hope that he would some day be happy. It was our doing —that friend's and mine,—that he gave lectures for three or four seasons. He had matter to utter; and there were many who wished to hear him; and in those days, before his works had reached their remunerative point of sale, the earnings by his lectures could not be unacceptable. So we confidently proceeded, taking the management of the arrangements, and leaving Carlyle nothing to do but to meet his audience, and say what he had to say. Whenever I went, my pleasure was a good deal spoiled by his unconcealable nervousness. Yellow as a guinea, with downcast eyes, broken speech at the beginning, and fingers which nervously picked at the desk before him, he could not for a moment be supposed to enjoy his own effort; and the lecturer's own enjoyment is a prime element of success. . . . From the time that his course was announced till it was finished, he scarcely slept, and he grew more dyspeptic and nervous every day; and we were at length entreated to say no more about his lecturing, as no fame and no money

or other advantage could counterbalance the misery which the engagement caused him.

HARRIET MARTINEAU. *Autobiography*.

SIR CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY ON CARLYLE

An impression of Carlyle, as he appeared after the completion of his "Cromwell."

CARLYLE was at this time past fifty years of age, had a strong, well-knit frame, a dark, ruddy complexion, piercing blue eyes, close-drawn lips, and an air of silent composure and authority. He was commonly dressed in a dark suit, a black stock, a deep folding linen collar, and a wide-brimmed hat, sometimes changed for one of soft felt. A close observer would have recognised him as a Scotchman, and probably concluded that he was a Scotchman who had filled some important employment. There was not a shade of discontent or impatience discernible in his countenance; if these feelings arose, they were kept in check by a disciplined will. It must be remembered that by this time his life had grown tranquil; he had outlived his early struggles to obtain a footing in life and a hearing from the world; he had written the "French Revolution" and "Cromwell," and his place in literature was no longer in doubt. A number of young Englishmen, beginning to distinguish themselves as writers or in public life, recognised him as master, and one of the show-places which distinguished foreigners were sure to visit in London was the narrow house in a dingy little street off the Thames, where the Philosopher of Chelsea resided.

— This is the aspect he presented among men to whom he was for the most part new. But I must speak of his relation to his fellow-traveller. If you want to know a man, says the proverb, make a solitary journey with him. We travelled for six weeks on a stretch, nearly always *tête-à-tête*. If I be a man who has entitled himself to be believed, I ask those who have come to regard Carlyle as exacting and domineering among associates, to accept as the simple truth my testimony that during those weeks of close and constant intercourse, there was not one word or act of his to the young man who was his travelling companion unworthy of an indulgent father. Of

arrogance or impatience not a shade. In debating the arrangements of the journey, and all the questions in which fellow-travellers have a joint interest, instead of exercising the authority to which his age and character entitled him, he gave and took with complaisance and good-fellowship.

SIR CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY. *Conversations with Carlyle.*

HENRY REEVE¹ ON CARLYLE

A political philosopher.

I AM amused to find Carlyle fairly brought before the world as a political writer, nay, even a political philosopher; for his writings have convinced the 'Morning Post' that such a thing as political philosophy exists. His little tractate on Chartism seems to have a great success. It is very genuine Carlylees (Carlylese?).

"Spangled fustian."

LADY B. said the truest thing of Carlyle's productions that ever was uttered; she called them 'spangled fustian'—a homely rough stuff, sparkling with genius in the seams.

At a dinner at the Procters', Dec. 19th, 1849, Reeve records that "Carlyle was so offensive I never made it up with him." But he found the Reminiscences fascinating. "It is impossible to present the details of life with more attractive clearness and picturesque effect. The most curious thing is that the style, instead of being a mass of cloudy affectation, is simple, flowing, and natural." Finally after reading Froude's book his distaste returns:

As for Carlyle himself, he is odious—arrogance, vanity, self-conceit, ingratitude to old friends—I never thought I should dislike him so much. He seems to have looked at everything the wrong side outwards.

HENRY REEVE. *Memoirs.*

¹ Henry Reeve (1813–1895), editor of the *Memoirs* of his friend Charles Greville: succeeded Sir George Cornewall Lewis as editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, 1855.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

1800-1859

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

1800-1859

THE future historian and essayist was, as every schoolboy probably does not know in these degenerate days, the son of Zachary Macaulay, that ardent philanthropist who was sometime Governor of Sierra Leone, and subsequently was one of the foremost of those who urged the abolition of the slave trade. Educated privately, young Macaulay went to Trinity, Cambridge, when he was eighteen years old, wrote two prize poems, won the Craven scholarship and a prize for Latin declamation, and became a Fellow of Trinity. In the Craven he was bracketed equal with two other Trinity men—George Long, of Ciceronian fame, and Henry Malden.

In August, 1825, began Macaulay's connection with the *Edinburgh Review*. The appearance of his essay on Milton in that number gave him at once an extraordinary literary reputation. But it was his conversational ability that made so great a social success of the young essayist. He became a welcome guest at Holland House, and at the literary breakfasts of Samuel Rogers. In 1826 he was called to the Bar, joining the northern circuit; but his real ambitions were centred in politics and literature. For a short time it looked as though commercial disaster might wither his hopes, for the house of Babington and Macaulay fell upon bad times, and he saw himself compelled to rely upon his own exertions for a livelihood. His Trinity fellowship (£300 a year) suddenly became of supreme importance to him; and it so chanced that it expired in 1831: in 1830, too, the commissionership of bankruptcy, which he had held for barely two years, was swept away by a new ministry. It was at this time, when he was forced to sell his University gold medal, that Lord Lansdowne offered Macaulay the "pocket borough" seat at Calne. He took to Parliamentary oratory as though it were his native element, and was well to the fore in the Reform Bill debates. After the Reform Act was passed he took office, and began to study Indian affairs. When the new India Act came into force he was thus encouraged to accept a seat on the Supreme Council of India, and in February, 1834,

he set sail for India with his sister Hannah, whom he had easily persuaded to accompany him on the voyage.

The pair returned in 1838, and Macaulay at once re-entered Parliament as member for Edinburgh. He had saved a competence in his Indian employ, and was now able to take things more easily and turn to those subjects in literature that really interested him. In 1842 his "Lays of Ancient Rome" appeared: in 1843 his "Essays" were published in collected form; and he was already working at the "History of England" which was to be so remarkable a literary and commercial success. The year 1847, when he lost his seat at Edinburgh, saw his practical retirement from the political field and his concentration on a literary and social life. It is true that Edinburgh, smitten with remorse, returned him again at the election of 1852 without solicitation and without expense. Macaulay merely had to appear, accept, and return thanks. He held the seat until 1856, but spoke rarely: failing health brought about his resignation in that year. In 1857 he was made a peer.

Macaulay was a great orator with a bad delivery, and a writer of eminence with a characteristic and easily imitable style. He spoke with extraordinary speed, so that the most practised reporters "panted after him in vain." In the same way he wrote with a vigour and animation that showed a full mind. He was perhaps too copious: he battered at his readers with a succession of illustrations that almost compelled acquiescence. He had a successful life, and a happy one. He never married, but made one of the most admirable of uncles. He died on the 28th of December, 1859, and was buried early in the New Year in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.

H. CRABB ROBINSON ON MACAULAY

I HAD a most interesting companion in young Macaulay, one of the most promising of the rising generation I have seen for a long time. He is the author of several much admired articles in the *Edinburgh Review*. . . . He has a good face,—not the delicate features of a man of genius and sensibility, but the strong lines and well-knit limbs of a man sturdy in body and mind. Very eloquent and cheerful, overflowing with words, and not poor in thought. Liberal in opinion, but no radical.

He showed a minute knowledge of subjects not introduced by himself. "

Diary, etc., of H. Crabb Robinson, Nov. 29, 1826.

SYDNEY SMITH ON MACAULAY

'YES, I take great credit to myself; I always prophesied his greatness from the first moment I saw him, then a very young and unknown man, on the Northern Circuit. There are no limits to his knowledge, on small subjects as well as great; he is like a book in breeches. . . . Yes, I agree, he is certainly more agreeable since his return from India. His enemies might perhaps have said before (though I never did so) that he talked rather too much; but now he has occasional flashes of silence, that make his conversation perfectly delightful. But what is far better and more important than all this is, that I believe Macaulay to be incorruptible. You might lay ribbons, stars, garters, wealth, titles, before him in vain. He has an honest, genuine love of his country, and the world could not bribe him to neglect her interests.'

'Oh, yes! we both talk a great deal, but I don't believe Macaulay ever did hear my voice. . . . Sometimes, when I have told a good story, I have thought to myself, Poor Macaulay! he will be very sorry some day to have missed hearing that.'

LADY HOLLAND. *Memoir of Sydney Smith.*

A dinner at Tom Longman's, Dec. 1839.

WE got Sydney on the overpowering topic of Macaulay. Macaulay is laying waste society with his waterspouts of talk; people in his company burst for want of an opportunity of dropping in a word; he confounds soliloquy and colloquy. Nothing could equal my diversion at seeing T. B. M. go to the Council the other day in a fine laced coat, neat green-bodied glass chariot and a feather in his hat. Sydney S. had said to Lord Melbourne that Macaulay was a book in breeches. Lord M. told the Queen; so whenever she sees her new Secretary at War, she goes into fits of laughter. I said that the worst feature in Macaulay's character was his appalling memory; he has a weapon more than anyone else in the world's tournament.

'Aye, indeed,' said S. S.; 'why, he could repeat the whole History of the Virtuous Blue-Coat Boy in 3 vols.,' post 8vo, without a slip. He should take two table-spoonfuls of the waters of Lethe every morning to correct his retentive powers.' . . .

HENRY REEVE. *Memoirs.*

TOM MOORE ON MACAULAY

Tom Moore met Macaulay several times, at Lansdowne House, Holland House, and elsewhere: these excerpts from his diary show how impressed he was with the young man's omniscience.

AUG. 2, 1840. Dined at Lansdowne House. A dinner of men only, Lady L. being at Bowood. Company: Macaulay, Lord Clarendon, Lord Clanricarde, Rogers, young Fortescue, and Fonblanque. Sat between Macaulay and Rogers. Of Macaulay's range of knowledge anything may be believed, so wonderful is his memory. . . .

Oct. 21, 1840. Went to Bowood to dinner. . . . Macaulay wonderful; never, perhaps, was there combined so much talent with so marvellous a memory. To attempt to record his conversation one must be as wonderfully gifted with memory as himself.

Dec. 15, 1841. Macaulay, another of the guests, and I, stayed for some time. He is a most wonderful man, and I rejoice to learn that the world may expect from him a History of England, taken up, I believe, where Hume leaves off. Rogers directed my attention to the passage in his last Edinburgh article, where he describes Warren Hastings's trial, and the remarkable assemblage of persons and circumstances which it brought together. Agreed perfectly with R. as to the over-gorgeousness of this part of the article. But the whole produces great effect, and is everywhere the subject of conversation.

March 19, 1842. . . . Breakfasted this morning with Milnes to meet the American Minister, Hallam, Macaulay, &c. &c. Macaulay opened for us quite a new character of his marvellous memory, which astonished as much as it amused me; and that was his acquaintance with the old Irish slang ballads, such as "The night before Larry was stretched," &c. &c. many of which he repeated as glibly off as I could do in my boyhood.

He certainly obeys most wonderfully Eloisa's injunction, "Do all things but *forget*."

June 26, 1831. Went (Lord John and I together, in a hackney-coach) to breakfast with Rogers. The party, besides ourselves, Macaulay, Luttrell, and Campbell. . . . In the course of conversation, Campbell quoted a line, "Ye diners-out, from whom we guard our spoons," and looking over at me said significantly, "You ought to know that line." I pleaded not guilty; upon which he said, "It is a poem that appeared in 'The Times,' which every one attributes to *you*;" but I again declared that I did not even remember it. Macaulay then broke silence, and said, to our general surprise, "That is *mine*;" on which we all expressed a wish to have it recalled to our memories, and he repeated the whole of it. I then remembered having been much struck with it at the time, and said that there was another squib still better, on the subject of William Bankes's candidacieship for Cambridge, which so amused me when it appeared, and showed such power in that style of composition, that I wrote up to Barnes about it, and advised him by all means to secure that hand as an ally. "That was mine also," said Macaulay; thus discovering to us a new power, in addition to that varied store of talent which we had already known him to possess. He is certainly one of the most remarkable men of the day.

THOMAS MOORE. *Memoirs, etc.*

EDGAR ALLAN POE ON MACAULAY

Macaulay's claims to greatness.

MACAULAY has obtained a reputation which, although deservedly great, is yet in a remarkable measure undeserved. The few who regard him merely as a terse, forcible, and logical writer, full of thought, and abounding in original views, often sagacious, and never otherwise than admirably expressed—appear to us precisely in the right. The many who look upon him as not only all this, but as a comprehensive and profound thinker, little prone to error, err essentially themselves. The source of the general mistake lies in a very singular consideration—yet in one upon which we do not remember ever to have heard a word of comment. We allude to a tendency in the

public mind towards logic for logic's sake—a liability to confound the vehicle with the thing conveyed—an aptitude to be so dazzled with the luminousness with which an idea is set forth as to mistake it for the luminousness of the idéa itself. The error is one exactly analogous with that which leads the immature poet to think himself sublime wherever he is obscure, because obscurity is a source of the sublime—thus confounding obscurity of expression with the expression of obscurity. In the case of Macaulay . . . we assent to what he says too often because we so very clearly understand what it is that he intends to say.

EDGAR ALLAN POE. *Criticisms.*

On Macaulay's Critical Papers.

THE style and general conduct of Macaulay's critical papers could scarcely be improved. . . . He has his mannerisms; but we see that, by dint of them, he is enabled to accomplish the extremes of unquestionable excellences—the extreme of clearness, of vigour (dependent upon clearness), of grace, and very especially of thoroughness. For his short sentences, for his antitheses, for his modulations, for his climaxes—for everything that he does—a very slight analysis suffices to show a distinct reason. His manner, thus, is simply the perfection of that justifiable rhetoric which has its basis in common sense; and to say that such rhetoric is never called in to the aid of *genius* is simply to disparage *genius*, and by no means to discredit the rhetoric. It is nonsense to assert that the highest *genius* would not be benefited by attention to its modes of manifestation—by availing itself of that Natural Art which it too frequently despises. Is it not evident that the more intrinsically valuable the rough diamond, the more gain accrues to it from polish?

EDGAR ALLAN POE. *Criticisms.*

PRAED¹ ON MACAULAY

Macaulay's personal appearance.

MACAULAY's outward man was never better described than in two sentences of Praed's Introduction to *Knight's Quarterly*

¹ Winthrop Mackworth Praed was closely associated with Macaulay, with whom he read at Trinity, Cambridge. Praed was the chief contributor to *Knight's*

Magazine. "There came up a short manly figure, marvellously upright, with a bad neckcloth, and one hand in his waistcoat pocket. Of regular beauty he had little to boast; but in faces where there is an expression of great power, or of great good humour, or both, you do not regret its absence." . . . He had a massive head, and features of a powerful and rugged cast, but so constantly lit up by every joyful and ennobling emotion that it mattered little if, when absolutely quiescent, his face was rather homely than handsome. While conversing at table no one thought him otherwise than good-looking; but, when he rose, he was seen to be short and stout in figure. . . . He at all times sat and stood straight, full, and square; and in this respect Woolner, in the fine statue at Cambridge, has missed what was undoubtedly the most marked fact in his personal appearance. He dressed badly, but not cheaply. His clothes, though ill put on, were good, and his wardrobe was always enormously overstocked. . . . He was unhandy to a degree quite unexampled in the experience of all who knew him. When in the open air he wore perfectly new dark kid gloves, into the fingers of which he never succeeded in inserting his own more than half way. . . .

TREVELYAN. *Macaulay's Life and Letters.*

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE, JULY, 1831

A sketch of Macaulay from the Noctes Ambrosianæ.

North.

A SON of old Zachary, I believe? Is he like the papa?

Tickler.

So I have heard—but I never saw the senior, of whom some poetical planter has so unjustifiably sung—

"How smooth, persuasive, plausible, and glib,
From holy lips is droppe'd the specious fib."

The son is an ugly, cross-made, splay-footed, shapeless little dumpling of a fellow, with a featureless face too—except

Quarterly Review from 1822-26. He entered Parliament in 1830 and obtained a secretaryship to the Board of Control from Peel in 1834, but he died of consumption five years later at the early age of 37.

indeed a good expansive forehead—sleek puritanical sandy hair—large glimmering eyes—and a mouth from ear to ear. He has a lisp and a burr, moreover, and speaks thickly and huskily for several minutes before he gets into the swing of his discourse; but after that, nothing can be more dazzling than his whole execution.

Blackwood's Magazine, July, 1831.

CARLYLE ON MACAULAY

Carlyle, having heard that he was to be “annihilated” in the Edinburgh Review, and that Macaulay was to be the executioner, wrote this to his brother after reading the article—which was, as a matter of fact, by Herman Merivale. The date is July 24, 1840.

MACAULAY's article is not so bad; on the whole, rather interesting to me, and flattering rather than otherwise.... One thing struck me much in this Macaulay, his theory of Liberal government. He considers Reform to mean a judicious combining of those that have any money to keep down those that have none. 'Hunger' among the great mass is *irremediable*, he says. *That the pigs be taught to die without squealing*: there is the sole improvement possible according to him. Did Whiggery ever express itself in a more damnable manner? He and I get our controversy rendered altogether precise in this way.

... At bottom, this Macaulay is but a poor creature with his dictionary literature and erudition, his saloon arrogance. He has no vision in him. He will neither see nor do any good thing, but be a poor Holland House unbeliever, with spectacles instead of eyes, to the end of him.

FROUDE. *Carlyle's Life in London*:

In Milnes' notebook is recorded a saying of Carlyle's on Macaulay: “Macaulay is well for a while, but one would not live under Niagara.” The same idea seems to have recurred to him when he wrote in his Journal, under date of March 14, 1848:

NIAGARA of eloquent commonplace talk from Macaulay. 'Very good-natured man;' man cased in official mail of proof; stood my impatient fire-explosions with much patience, merely hissing a little steam up, and continued his Niagara—

supply and demand; . . . Essentially irremediable, commonplace nature of the man; all that was in him now gone to the tongue; a squat, thick-set, low-browed, short, grizzled little man of fifty. These be thy gods, oh Israel!

On Macaulay returning from his Indian sojourn with a fortune and being entertained at breakfasts, Carlyle and Milnes met him at one at Rogers's.

MACAULAY, overflowing with the stores of knowledge which had been accumulating during his sojourn in India, seized the first opportunity that presented itself, and having once obtained the ear of the company, never allowed it to escape for a moment until the party was at an end. Greatly dissatisfied at the issue of a morning from which he had expected so much, Milnes followed Carlyle into the street. “I am so sorry,” he said, “that Macaulay would talk so much and prevent our hearing a single word from you.” “What!” he said, “was that the Right Honourable Tom? I had no idea that it was the Right Honourable Tom. Ah, well, I understand the Right Honourable Tom now.”

WEMYSS REID. *Life of Lord Houghton.*

And, finally, from the Journal again:

‘LITERARY world’ (bless the mark!) much occupied of late with ‘Macaulay’s History’ the most popular history book ever written. Fourth edition already, within, perhaps, four months. Book to which four hundred editions could not lend any permanent value, there being no depth of sense in it at all, and a very great quantity of wind and other temporary ingredients, which are the reverse of sense.

FROUDE. *Carlyle’s Life in London.*

“CHRISTOPHER NORTH” ON MACAULAY

“*Christopher North*,” Macaulay’s ancient adversary, speaks with generous approval of the “*Lays of Ancient Rome*.”

WHAT! Poetry from Macaulay? Ay, and why not? The House hushes itself to hear him, even though Stanley is the cry. If

he is not the first of critics, (spare our blushes,) who is? Name the young Poet who could have written the Armada. The Young Poets all want fire; Macaulay is full of fire. The Young Poets are somewhat weakly; he is strong. The Young Poets are rather ignorant; his knowledge is great. The Young Poets mumble books; he devours them. The Young Poets dally with their subject; he strikes its heart. The Young Poets are still their own heroes; he sees but the chiefs he celebrates. The Young Poets weave dreams with shadows transitory as clouds without substance; he builds realities lasting as rocks. The Young Poets steal from all and sundry, and deny their thefts; he robs in the face of day. Whom? Homer.

Sir Walter would have rejoiced in Horatius as if he had been a doughty Douglas.

Now by our sire Quirinus
It was a goodly sight
To see the thirsty standards
Swept down the tide of flight.

That is the way of doing business! A cut and thrust style, without any flourish. Scott's style when his blood was up, and the first words came like a vanguard impatient for battle.

Blackwood's Magazine (quoted in *Macaulay's Life and Letters*).

THE QUARTERLY REVIEW, MARCH, 1849, ON MACAULAY

A few extracts from Croker on Macaulay's History—the review of which Rogers said, “Croker intended murder and committed suicide.”

IT may seem too epigrammatic, but it is, in our serious judgment, strictly true, to say that his History seems to be a kind of combination and exaggeration of the peculiarities of all his former efforts. It is as full of political prejudice and partisan advocacy as any of his parliamentary speeches. It makes the facts of English History as fabulous as his Lays do those of Roman tradition; and it is written with as captious, as dogmatical, and as cynical a spirit as the bitterest of his Reviews. . . . We have been so long the opponents of the political party to which Mr. Macaulay belongs that we welcomed the prospect

of again meeting him on the neutral ground of literature. We are of that class of Tories—Protestant Tories, as they were called—that have no sympathy with the Jacobites. We are as strongly convinced as Mr. Macaulay can be of the necessity of the Revolution of 1688—of the general prudence and expediency of the steps taken by our Whig and Tory ancestors of the Convention Parliament, and of the happiness, for a century and a half, of the constitutional results. We were, therefore, not without hope that at least in these two volumes, almost entirely occupied with the progress and accomplishment of that Revolution, we might without any sacrifice of our political feelings enjoy unalloyed the pleasures reasonably to be expected from Mr. Macaulay's high powers both of research and illustration. That hope has been deceived: Mr. Macaulay's historical narrative is poisoned with a rancour more violent than even the passions of the time; and the literary qualities of the work, though in some respects very remarkable, are far from redeeming its substantial defects. There is hardly a page—we speak literally, hardly a page—that does not contain something objectionable either in substance or in colour: and the whole of the brilliant and at first captivating narrative is perceived on examination to be impregnated to a really marvellous degree with bad taste, bad feeling, and, we are under the painful necessity of adding—bad faith.

A humble imitator of Scott.

MR. MACAULAY deals with history, evidently, as we think, in imitation of the novelists—his first object being always picturesque effect—his constant endeavour to give from all the repositories of gossip that have reached us a kind of circumstantial reality to his incidents, and a sort of dramatic life to his personages. For this purpose he would not be very solicitous about contributing any substantial addition to history, strictly so called; on the contrary, indeed, he seems to have willingly taken it as he found it, adding to it such lace and trimmings as he could collect from the Monmouth-street of literature, seldom it may be safely presumed of very delicate quality. It is, as Johnson drolly said, 'an old coat with a new facing—the old dog in a new doublet.'

Mr. Croker perorates.

WE must here conclude. We have exhausted our time and our space, but not our topics. We have selected such of the more prominent defects and errors of Mr. Macaulay as were manageable within our limits; but numerous as they are, we beg that they may be considered as specimens only of the infinitely larger assortment that the volumes would afford, and be read not merely as individual instances, but as indications of the general style of the work, and the prevailing *animus* of the writer. . . . He takes much pains to parade—perhaps he really believes in—his impartiality, with what justice we appeal to the foregoing pages; but he is guilty of a prejudice as injurious in its consequences to truth as any political bias. He abhors whatever is not in itself picturesque, while he clings with the tenacity of a Novelist to the *piquant* and the startling. Whether it be the boudoir of a strumpet or the death-bed of a monarch—the strong character of a statesman-warrior abounding in contrasts and rich in mystery, or the personal history of a judge trained in the Old Bailey to vulgarize and ensanguine the King's Bench—he luxuriates with a vigour and variety of language and illustration which renders his 'History' an attractive and absorbing story-book. . . . We protest against this species of *carnival* history; no more like the reality than the Eglintoun Tournament or the Costume Quadrilles of Buckingham Palace; and we deplore the squandering of so much melodramatic talent on a subject which we have hitherto reverenced as the figure of Truth arrayed in the simple garments of Philosophy. We are ready to admit an hundred times over Mr. Macaulay's literary powers—brilliant even under the affection with which he too frequently disfigures them. He is a great painter, but a suspicious narrator; a grand proficient in the picturesque, but a very poor professor of the historic. These volumes have been, and his future volumes as they appear will be, devoured with the same eagerness that *Oliver Twist* or *Vanity Fair* excite—with the same quality of zest, though perhaps with a higher degree of it;—but his pages will seldom, we think, receive a second perusal—and the work, we apprehend, will hardly find a permanent place on the historic shelf—nor ever assuredly, if continued in the spirit of the first

two volumes, be quoted as authority on any question or point of the History of England.

Quarterly Review. March, 1849.

JEFFREY ON MACAULAY

To Macaulay, on the History.

MY DEAR MACAULAY,

The mother that bore you, had she been yet alive, could scarcely have felt prouder or happier than I do at this outburst of your graver fame. I have long had a sort of parental interest in your glory; and it is now mingled with a feeling of deference to your intellectual superiority which can only consort, I take it, with the character of a female parent.

TREVELYAN. *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay.*

J. S. MILL ON MACAULAY

From a letter to John Sterling, dated November, 1842.

HAVE you seen Macaulay's old-Roman ballads? If you have not, do not judge of them from extracts, which give you the best passages without the previous preparation. They are in every way better, and nearer to what one might fancy Campbell would have made them, than I thought Macaulay capable of. He has it not in him to be a great poet; there is no real genius in the thing, no revelation from the depths either of thought or feeling; but that being allowed for, there is real *verve*, and much more of the simplicity of ballad poetry than one would at all expect. The latter part of the "Battle of Lake Regillus," and the whole of "Virginia," seem to me admirable.

J. S. MILL. *Letters.*

Twelve years later, with modified enthusiasm.

IT would certainly be unfair to measure the worth of any age by that of its popular objects of literary or artistic admiration. Otherwise one might say the present age will be known and estimated by posterity as the age which thought Macaulay a great writer.

J. S. MILL. *Diary* (Feb. 11, 1854).

HENRY REEVE ON MACAULAY

Expectation raised too high.

THE great talk of the day is Macaulay's Vols. III. and. IV. of his History, which has upon the whole disappointed people. Expectation had been raised too high; 25,000 copies were sold the first day, weighing 61 tons, and all the world set to work to read the book. But it wearies by the sustained effort of the style; and having looked into some of the authorities I am astonished at its inaccuracies. There is a capital article in the "Times" of to-day on the book by S. Lucas. The blunder about Schomberg¹ was discovered by myself, on a hint from Panizzi. I wrote to Macaulay about it, and he admitted it to be 'a blemish.' Sir J. Stephen said to me that it was 'the most valuable and inimitable of books;' but with all its brilliancy, there is a want of temper, of truth, and of taste about it which makes me feel I had rather not have written it.

HENRY REEVE. *Memoirs.*

HARRIET MARTINEAU ON MACAULAY

Macaulay's "loose method of writing."

HE has fatally manifested his loose and unscrupulous method of narrating, and, in his first edition, gave no clue whatever to his authorities, and no information in regard to dates which he could possibly suppress. Public opinion compelled, in future editions, some appearance of furnishing references to authorities, such as every conscientious historian finds it indispensable to his peace of mind to afford; but it is done by Macaulay in the most ineffectual and baffling way possible,—by clubbing together the mere names of his authorities at the bottom of the page, so that reference is all but impracticable. Where it is made, by painstaking readers, the inaccuracies and misrepresentations of the historian are found to multiply as the work of verification proceeds.

¹ The first editions contained a picturesque account of Schomberg's burial in Westminster Abbey, whereas in fact he was buried in St. Patrick's. See, on this point, the *Edinburgh Review* (Macaulay's *Life and Letters*), April, 1876.

A solemn warning.

WHILE I write, announcement is made of two more volumes to appear in the course of the year. If the radical faults of the former ones are remedied, there may yet be before this gifted man something like the 'career' so proudly anticipated for him a quarter of a century ago. If not, all is over; and his powers, once believed adequate to the construction of eternal monuments of statesmanship and noble edifices for intellectual worship; will be found capable of nothing better than rearing gay kiosks in the flower gardens of literature, to be soon swept away by the caprices of a new taste, as superficial as his own.

HARRIET MARTINEAU. *Autobiography.*

A dissection of Macaulay.

A HISTORY of England by Macaulay was anticipated as the richest conceivable treat; though some thoughtful, or experienced, or hostile person here and there threw out the remark that as his oratory was literature, and his literature oratory, his history would probably be something else than history—most likely epigrammatic criticism. There was some further preparation for his failure as well as success as an historian after his article on Bacon in the *Edinburgh*. That Essay disabused the wisest who expected services of the first order from Macaulay. In that article he not only betrayed his incapacity for philosophy, and his radical ignorance of the subject he undertook to treat, but laid himself open to the charge of helping himself to the very materials he was disparaging, and giving as his own large excerpts from Mr. Montagu, while loading him with contempt and rebuke. But those who were best aware of Macaulay's faults were carried away by the delight of reading him. As an artist, we are under deep obligations to him; and in his own walk of Art—fresh, and open to the multitude—he was supreme. The mere style, forceful and antithetical, becomes fatiguing from its want of repose, as well as its mannerism; but his cumulative method of illustration is unrivalled. It has been, is, and will be, abundantly imitated, but quite unsuccessfully; for this reason—that it requires Macaulay's erudition to support Macaulay's cumulative method; and men of Macaulay's erudition are not likely

to have his eclectic turn; and, if they had, would make their own path, instead of following at his heels. . . .

Lacking in Heart.

MACAULAY's was mainly an intellectual life, brilliant and stimulating, but cold and barren as regards the highest part of human nature. As in his History there is but one touch of tenderness—Henrietta Wentworth's name carved upon the tree—so in his brilliant and varied display of power in his life, the one thing wanting is heart. Probably the single touch of sensibility was in him, and we should find some bleeding gashes, or some scars in the stiff bark if we were at liberty to search; but hard and rugged it was, while throwing out its profusion of dancing foliage and many-tinted blossoms. It was a magnificent growth; and we may accept its beauty very thankfully, though we know it is only fit for ornament, and not to yield sweet solace for present, or perennial use. If we cannot have in him the man of soul, heroic or other, nor the man of genius as statesman or poet, let us take him as the eloquent scholar, and be thankful.

HARRIET MARTINEAU. *Biographical Sketches.*

S. C. HALL ON MACAULAY

Macaulay's person.

HIS person was in his favour; in form as in mind he was robust, with a remarkably intelligent expression, aided by deep blue eyes that seemed to sparkle, and a mouth remarkably flexible. . . . I found him—as the world has found him—a man of rare intelligence, deep research, and untiring energy in pursuit of facts: also a kind, courteous, and unaffected gentleman. His memory is to me one of the pleasantest I can recall.

He may have been a warm friend, but he was certainly not a relentless enemy. . . . After his death there came forth much evidence, little expected, of the kindness and generosity of his nature.

S. C. HALL. *Retrospect of a Long Life.*